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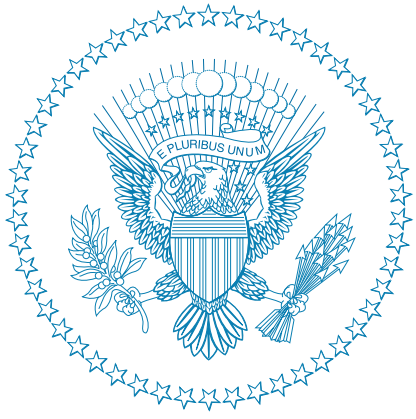
OF THE
UNITED STATES

Barack Obama



2009

(IN TWO BOOKS)

BOOK II—JULY 1 TO DECEMBER 31, 2009

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Foreword

The second half of 2009 was a time of great promise and great change for America. As we continued to recover from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, we took steps to put more people back to work and help businesses grow and hire. We focused on the issues that would help put us on a path to long-term prosperity. And we renewed our commitment to making the world beyond our borders more secure, more peaceful, and more free.

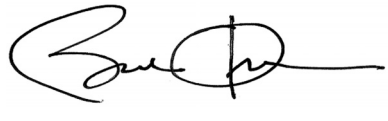
After acting quickly to shore up the financial system and stabilize the auto industry, our challenge became putting more Americans back on the job and restoring a sense of security to the middle class. To that end, we made it easier for small businesses to get credit and hire. We continued to direct resources from the Recovery Act toward putting more Americans back to work across the country. And in November, we saw the best jobs report since 2007.

We also recognized that in order to put America on sounder footing in the long-term, we had to confront some of the challenges that had been holding us back for years. The debate over health care reform, which began in the summer, spilled over into the fall as we kept fighting to make quality, affordable health care a reality for millions of Americans. We launched Race to the Top, a program that encouraged States to make serious changes to our education system that will help give our children the skills they need to compete for the jobs of the future. And we lived up to our founding principles of justice and equality by improving care for our veterans with the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009 and expanding Federal hate crime protections to include gay, lesbian, and transgender Americans through the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

As we continued to bring the Iraq War to a responsible end, I addressed our Nation from the United States Military Academy to announce a new way forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda, break the Taliban's momentum, and begin to bring our troops home by summer of 2011. We also worked with partner nations to make progress in our effort to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and address climate change. I traveled abroad to meet with our allies and partners in Africa and Asia. And I was honored and humbled to accept the Nobel Peace Prize as a symbol of the important role that America and people around the world play in advancing the universal rights of every human being.

Late 2009 was also marked by loss and tragedy. In November, our Nation was shocked and heartbroken at the senseless killing of 13 Americans at Fort Hood. America lost a true champion when the booming voice of Senator Ted Kennedy fell silent. And as Americans celebrated the Christmas holiday, a terrorist tried to bring down an aircraft bound for Detroit.

All the victories and disappointments, triumphs and struggles, only strengthen my faith in the American spirit. I continue to be inspired by the determination and resolve shown by the men and women of this country. And as we move forward as a Nation, I am confident that America's brightest days are still ahead.



Preface

This book contains the papers and speeches of the President of the United States that were issued by the Office of the Press Secretary during the period July 1–December 31, 2009. The material has been compiled and published by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration.

The material is presented in chronological order, and the dates shown in the headings are the dates of the documents or events. In instances when the release date differs from the date of the document itself, that fact is shown in the textnote. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy: Remarks are checked against an audio recording, and signed documents are checked against the original. Textnotes and cross references have been provided by the editors for purposes of identification or clarity. Speeches were delivered in Washington, DC, unless indicated. The times noted are local times. All materials that are printed in full text in the book have been indexed in the subject and name indexes and listed in the document categories list.

The Public Papers of the Presidents series was begun in 1957 in response to a recommendation of the National Historical Publications Commission. An extensive compilation of messages and papers of the Presidents covering the period 1789 to 1897 was assembled by James D. Richardson and published under congressional authority between 1896 and 1899. Since then, various private compilations have been issued, but there was no uniform publication comparable to the Congressional Record or the United States Supreme Court Reports. Many Presidential papers could be found only in the form of mimeographed White House releases or as reported in the press. The Commission therefore recommended the establishment of an official series in which Presidential writings, addresses, and remarks of a public nature could be made available.

The Commission's recommendation was incorporated in regulations of the Administrative Committee of the Federal Register, issued under section 6 of the Federal Register Act (44 U.S.C. 1506), which may be found in title 1, part 10, of the Code of Federal Regulations.

A companion publication to the Public Papers series, the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, was begun in 1965 to provide a broader range of Presidential materials on a more timely basis to meet the needs of the contemporary reader. Beginning with the administration of Jimmy Carter, the Public Papers series expanded its coverage to include additional material as printed in the Weekly Compilation. On January 20, 2009, the printed Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents was superseded by the online Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents. The Daily Compilation provides a listing of the President's daily schedule and meetings, when announced, and other items of general interest issued by the Office of the Press Secretary. In 2012, the Government Printing Office and the Office of the Federal Register released a mobile web application (http://m.gpo.gov/dcpd) that catalogues the daily public activities of the President of the United States and enhances features of the online Daily Compilation with user-friendly search capability, allowing users to access Presidential content by date, category, subject, or location.

Also included in the printed edition are lists of the President's nominations submitted to the Senate, materials released by the Office of the Press Secretary that are not printed in full text in the book, and proclamations, Executive orders, and other Presidential documents released by the Office of the Press Secretary and published in the *Federal Register.* This information appears in the appendixes at the end of the book.

Volumes covering the administrations of Presidents Herbert Hoover, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald R. Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, William J. Clinton, and George W. Bush are also included in the Public Papers series.

The Public Papers of the Presidents publication program is under the direction of Michael L. White, Managing Editor, Office of the Federal Register. The series is produced by the Presidential and Legislative Publications Unit. The Chief Editor of this book was Laurice A. Clark, assisted by Lois M. Davis, Michael J. Forcina, Joseph G. Frankovic, Diane Hiltabidle, Alfred Jones, Joshua H. Liberatore, Heather N. McDaniel, Stacey A. Mulligan, Ryan R. Nolan, Amelia E. Otovo, D. Gregory Perrin, Matthew R. Regan, and Joseph K. Vetter.

The frontispiece and photographs used in the portfolio were supplied by the White House Photo Office. The typography and design of the book were developed by the Government Printing Office under the direction of Davita Vance Cooks, Acting Public Printer.

Charles A. Barth
Director of the Federal Register

David S. Ferriero
Archivist of the United States

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Secretary of the Interior	Kenneth L. Salazar
Secretary of Agriculture	Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Commerce	Gary F. Locke
Secretary of Labor	Hilda L. Solis
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Secretary of Housing and Urban Development	Shaun L.S. Donovan
Secretary of Transportation	Raymond H. LaHood
Secretary of Energy	Steven Chu
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Secretary of Homeland Security	Janet A. Napolitano
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United States Trade Representative	Ronald Kirk

Director of the Office of Management and Budget	Peter R. Orszag
Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers	Christina D. Romer
United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations	Susan E. Rice

Administration of Barack Obama

2009

Remarks at a Virtual Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Annandale, Virginia

July 1, 2009

The President. Good to see you guys. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Thank you, northern Virginia. Thank you very much. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. What a wonderful welcome, and I'm so grateful to all of you for taking the time to be here.

A couple of quick acknowledgments: First of all, I want to thank President Templin and Chancellor DuBois for their wonderful hospitality. We are grateful to both of them.

We've got some extraordinary elected officials, a few that I want to mention. First of all, you've got one of the finest Governors in the country, who also is doing a great job as DNC chair. Please give Tim Kaine a big round of applause. Part of the reason Tim is such a good Governor is because he took notes while being Lieutenant Governor to the former Governor and now Senator for the State of Virginia, an outstanding public servant, Mark Warner. And three outstanding Members of Congress, Bobby Scott, Jim Moran, and Gerry Connolly, thank you so much, guys, for the great job you do every day.

And so I know there's all kinds of stuff Valerie was explaining. Don't worry, she's in charge, so she'll organize us. I just want to give a few remarks at the outset, and then we'll save most of the time for questions.

First of all, it's wonderful to be here in Annandale, and I'm looking forward to answering questions about what is, obviously, one of the most important issues facing American families, American businesses, and the American Government. But before I begin, I just want to say a few words about where we are as a Nation and where we need to go.

And we're living through extraordinary times, I don't need to tell you. This generation of Americans, our generation, has been called to confront challenges of a magnitude that we have not seen in decades, perhaps unlike anything we've seen in recent history, challenges that few generations of Americans are asked to face. In addition to the immediate threats that we face, we've got two wars going on and a very deep recession. Our economy has also been weakened by problems that have plagued us for decades: the crushing cost of health care, the state of our schools, our continuing dependence on foreign oil.

Now, I know there are some who say we can't tackle all of these problems; it's too much; Congress can't handle it; the President is juggling too many things; my administration is taking on too much too soon; we're moving too fast. What I say is that America has waited long enough for action on these issues. It's not too soon to fix our schools when we know that if our children are not prepared, they are not going to compete in the 21st century. It's not too soon to wean ourselves off of dirty sources of energy so that we can grab hold of a clean energy future. We've been talking about clean energy since Richard Nixon. And it's time for us to act. And I congratulate, by the way, the House of Representatives for beginning action this past week on a historic clean energy bill. It's also not too soon to reform our health care system, which we've been talking about since Teddy Roosevelt was President.

We are at a defining moment for this Nation. If we act now, then we can rebuild our economy in a way that makes it strong, competitive, sustainable, and prosperous once more. We can lead this century the same way that we led the last century. But if we don't act, if we let this moment pass, we could see this economy just sputter along for decades—a slow, steady decline in which the chances for our children and our grandchildren are fewer than the opportunities that were given to us. And that's contrary to the history of America. One of our core ideas has always been that we leave the next generation better off than us. And that's why we have to act right now.

I know that people say the costs of fixing our problems are great, and in some cases they are.

The costs of inaction, of not doing anything, are even greater; they're unacceptable. And that's why this town hall and this debate that we're having around health care is so important.

Let me just give you a few statistics. Many of you already know these. In the last 9 years, premiums have risen three times faster than wages for the average family. I don't need to tell you this because you've seen it in your own lives. If you've—even if you've got health insurance—and 46 million people don't—if you've got health insurance, you have seen your costs double. They've gone up three times faster than wages. If we do nothing, then those costs are just going to keep on going higher and higher.

In recent years, over one-third of small businesses have reduced benefits, and many have dropped coverage altogether since the early nineties, not because small-business owners don't want to provide benefits to their workers, but they just simply can't afford it; they don't have the money. If we don't act, that means that more people are going to lose coverage and more people are going to lose their jobs because those businesses are not going to be competitive.

Unless we act, within a decade, one out of every five dollars we earn will be spent on health care. And for those who rightly worry about deficits, the amount our Government spends on Medicare and Medicaid will eventually grow larger than what our Government spends today on everything else combined—everything else combined.

The Congressional Budget Office just did a study that showed that when you look at the rising costs of entitlement, 90 percent of it is Medicare and Medicaid—it's not Social Security—90 percent of it comes from the Federal share of health care costs. So if we want to control our deficits, the only way for us to do it is to control health care costs.

Now, those are all abstractions; those are numbers. But many of you know that this translates in the pain and heartache in a very personal way for families all across America. I know because during the 2 years that I campaigned for President, every town hall meeting I had, people would raise horrible stories about their experiences in the medical system. And now that I'm President, I'm hearing those same stories. I get 10 letters a day; out of the 40,000 or so that the White House receives, my staff selects 10 for me to read every single day. And at least half of them relate to a story about somebody who has been denied coverage because of a preexisting condition, or somebody who finds out that what they thought was going to be a $500 bill ends up being a $25,000 bill.

I was at a town hall meeting in Green Bay, Wisconsin, met a young woman, 36 years old, has breast cancer that's metastasized. She's got two small children. Her and her husband are both employed, both have health insurance, and yet she still has $50,000 worth of debt. And all she's thinking about right now is—instead of thinking about how to get well, she's thinking, if I don't survive this, my main legacy to my children may be another $50,000 worth of debt.

Everybody here knows stories like that. Some of you have experienced them personally. So this is a problem that we can't wait to fix. It's not something that we're going to keep on putting off indefinitely. This is about who we are as a country. And that's why we are going to pass health care reform, not 10 years from now, not 5 years from now, we are going to pass it this year. That is my commitment. We're going to get it done.

Now, we've already started to see some progress in Washington. Those who said we couldn't do it, they're already being surprised, because as a consequence of us pushing, suddenly the drug companies and the insurance companies and the hospitals, all of them are starting to realize this train is leaving the station, we better get on board.

So just a few weeks ago, the pharmaceutical industry agreed to $80 billion in spending reductions that we can use to close the so-called doughnut hole. Some of you know what the doughnut hole is, right, where senior citizens who are on the prescription drug plan under Medicaid, they get their drugs reimbursed up to a certain point, and then suddenly there's a

gap until it reaches thousands of dollars in out-of-pocket costs.

And so we've struck a deal with the drug companies; they're willing to cut those costs for seniors in half. Already we're seeing that when we put pressure to reform the system, then these industries are going to have to respond. Last month, doctors and hospitals, labor and business, insurers and drug companies all came together and agreed to decrease the annual rate of health care growth by 1.5 percent. That would translate into $2 trillion or more of savings over the next decade, and that would mean lower costs for everybody, for ordinary families.

In the past 2 weeks, the committee in the Senate, led by Senator Kennedy and Senator Dodd, have made tremendous progress on a plan to hold down costs, improve patient care, and ensure that you won't lose your coverage even if you lose your job, or if you change your job, or if you've got a preexisting medical condition.

But now we need to finish the job. There's no doubt that we have to preserve what's best in the health care system, and that means allowing Americans who like their doctor and like their health care plan to keep their plan. And that's going to be a priority for us. But we also have to fix what's broken about the system, and that means permanently bringing down costs and giving more choice for everyone.

And to do this, we've got to do a couple of things. We have to build on the investments that we've made in electronic medical records. We already made those investments in the Recovery Act, because when everything is digitalized, all your records—your privacy is protected—put all your records on a digital form, that reduces medical errors. It means that nurses don't have to read the scrawl of doctors when they are trying to figure out what treatments to apply. That saves lives, that saves money, and it will still ensure privacy.

We need to invest in prevention and wellness that help Americans live longer, healthier lives. We know this saves money. If we can help somebody control obesity, they are less likely to get diabetes. And if they are less likely to get diabetes that means that we are going to be saving a whole lot of money in hospital costs.

The biggest thing we can do to hold down costs is to change the incentives of the health care system that automatically equates expensive care with good care. Now, this is an important concept, so I want everybody to really focus on this. We are—we've been under the illusion that the more health care we get, the healthier we become. And it turns out that every study shows that the question is, are you getting the right care, are you getting the best care, the high-quality care, rather than are you having a whole bunch of tests ordered that are unnecessary, getting a bunch of treatments that are unnecessary, staying in hospitals longer than may be necessary, all of which drives up your costs, but doesn't make you better.

Now, we have to ask ourselves why there are places like Geisinger Health Care Systems in rural Pennsylvania or Intermountain Health in Salt Lake City that offer high-quality health care at costs that are well below average, in some cases 30 percent lower than in other communities. If they can do it, there's no reason why all of America shouldn't do that. We've got to identify the best practices across the country, we've got to learn from those successes, and then we've got to replicate those successes elsewhere.

And we should change the warped incentives that reward doctors and hospitals based on how many tests or procedures they prescribe, even if those tests and procedures aren't shown to actually make people better, or if they result in medical mistakes. Doctors across this country did not get into the profession just to be bean counters or paper pushers, but more and more time that doctors should be spending with patients are spent on administration and worrying how do they deal with how they're reimbursed. We've got to create a simplified, more effective system where they are reimbursed for quality care, as opposed to having to distort their practices in ways that don't actually make their patients better.

It's also time to provide Americans who can't afford health insurance with more affordable options. I believe this is a moral imperative and it is an economic imperative. It's a moral imperative because in a country as wealthy as ours, if people are working and holding up their

responsibilities, they shouldn't be bankrupted just because they get sick. On the other hand, it's an economic imperative because every single one of us who do have health insurance, our families, on average, are paying an extra $1,000 in premiums for uncompensated care.

Hospitals and doctors are adding those costs to your premiums, and insurance companies are adding those costs to your premiums, even if you don't know it. And if we can get a system in which people are getting regular checkups, mammograms, all the things that we know prevent disease from occurring over the long term, or at least allow us to catch those diseases early, that's going to allow us to drive down costs for everybody.

So what we have been working on is the creation of something called the health insurance exchange. And this is going to be a marketplace, which would allow you to one-stop shop for health care plans and compare benefits and prices in simple, easy-to-understand language, and then choose the best plan for you. None of these plans would be able to deny coverage on the basis of a preexisting condition. All of them would include an affordable, basic benefit package. If you couldn't afford these plans, then we could provide you a little bit of help so that you can afford these plans.

I also strongly believe that one of the options in the exchange should be a public option, in order for us to create some competition for the private insurers to keep them honest. If they are in fact giving good service and providing high-quality coverage, then that's where people will want to go. But there should be a benchmark there of a public plan, nonfor-profit plan, that keeps administrative costs low and is focused on providing good service. And that way you can make the decision, which deal is going to be better for you and your family.

Now, I know one of the biggest questions on everybody's mind is, how do we pay for all this? How do we finance reform? And I have made a commitment, because our deficit is a genuine problem, that whatever we do we have to pay for. This can't add to our deficits. It's got to be deficit neutral over the next 10 years.

Here's the good news: About two-thirds of the costs of the reforms that we are proposing will come from reallocating money that is already being spent in the health care system but isn't being spent wisely. So it doesn't involve more spending; it just involves smarter spending. A lot of the money that's being spent in the health care system right now adds nothing to the quality of patient care.

And I'll just give you one example. We spend right now about—over the next 10 years, we will spend $177 billion—$177 billion over the next decade in unwarranted subsidies to insurance companies under something called Medicaid Advantage—Medicare Advantage. Now, this does not make seniors healthier. People who are signed up for this private insurance subsidized program don't get any better care than those who aren't. The subsidies don't go to the patients; they go to the insurance companies. Now, think if we took that $177 billion and helped families so that they could have insurance, and that we could have preventive care. So about two-thirds of the costs of the reform we're proposing is just reallocating money that's already in the system, you, the taxpayers, are already paying for.

Now, one-third of it we're going to have to pay for by increased revenues. And what I've proposed is, is that if we capped the itemized deductions that very wealthy people do—the top 2 percent use on their income tax—so that they're getting the same tax breaks as everybody else, as opposed to getting higher tax breaks because they've got a bigger house, then we can pay for the rest of reform.

We've already identified $950 billion over 10 years—a little less than $100 billion a year—in order to pay for reform, two-thirds of it reallocating money, one-third of it with increased revenues. That's a sensible investment for us to make in solving an intractable problem that has been dragging down family finances, businesses, and the Federal Government for far too long.

Now, keep in mind, by the way, what we've identified as paying for the system, that doesn't even include the savings that we're going to get from prevention or the savings that

we're going to get from health IT because—in using congressional jargon, which I'm never supposed to do because nobody understands it—it's not scorable. And what that means is, is that the Congressional Budget Office can't identify exactly how much you would save. Even though everybody believes that it will end up saving a lot of money, we can't put a hard number on it. So we will get additional savings that will drive down costs. In the meantime, the costs of reform will be paid for with hard dollars that we've identified.

So here's the bottom line: Now we're going to start—I'm almost done here, but this is a big, complicated topic, so I hope you forgive me—we're starting to make progress on Capitol Hill. We're identifying ways not only to reform the system, to make it smarter and more efficient, more user-friendly, better for American families, but also ways to pay for it in a way that doesn't bloat our deficit.

But the hardest part is yet to come, because everybody here knows that the easiest thing to do when you're looking at big policy questions like health care is just to be cynical: It can't be done. And the naysayers are already starting to line up and finding every excuse and scare tactic in the book for why reform is not going to happen. This is going on as we speak. And what I say to these critics is, well, what's your alternative? Is your alternative just to stand pat and keep on watching more and more families lose their health care, more and more families with higher out-of-pocket costs for less insurance, businesses who are not able to compete internationally, a Medicare and a Medicaid system that is run amok? Is that your alternative?

What do you say to all those families who can't pay their medical bills? What do we tell those businesses that are having to choose between closing their doors or eliminating benefits for their workers? What do you say to every taxpayer whose dollars are propping up a system that doesn't work and that's driving us into debt?

This isn't just about those Americans without health care; it's about every American. Because if we do not act to bring down costs, everybody's health care will be in jeopardy. If you lose your job, or if you've got a preexisting condition, you don't know that your family is going to be secure. All of us are in this together.

So when it comes to energy, when it comes to improving our schools, and when it comes to health care, I don't accept the status quo. And you shouldn't either. And I don't think that the American people want to just stand pat. They know that change isn't easy. They know there are going to be setbacks and false starts. But they also know this, that we're in one of those rare moments where everybody is ready to move into the future. We just can't be scared. We've got to stop clinging to a broken system that doesn't work, and we've got to have the courage to reach out for a future that's going to be better for our children and our grandchildren.

I believe we can accomplish it this year. But in order to make it happen, I'm going to need ordinary Americans to stand up and say, "Now is the time." You are what are going to drive this process forward, because if Congress thinks that the American people don't want to see change, frankly, the lobbyists and the special interests will end up winning the day. But when the American people decide that something needs to happen, nothing can stop us.

So I hope you'll join me. Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

Now, all right. Now, if I'm not mistaken, the way this is going to work—Valerie, you are going to be in charge of directing; you're traffic cop, in terms of——

White House Senior Adviser Valerie B. Jarrett. I'm going to be in charge. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

So in my opening remarks, Mr. President, I mentioned that when you released your YouTube video over the weekend, we received literally hundreds of video questions from all across the country. Your staff looked through all those questions and have selected a cross-section that represents a broad cross-section of the kinds of questions that came up.

I want to emphasize that the President has not seen the questions ahead of time. [*Laughter*] Absolutely not. And so we're going to begin with a video question, Mr. President, if you look at the screen.

The President. All right.

Health Care Reform/Private Medical Insurance

Q. Hi, my name is Steve White. I'm in Spring Valley, New York. And my question for the President is: Why are we considering a health care plan which maintains the private insurance companies with their high overhead costs, instead of a single-payer plan, which would eliminate the high overhead costs, saving the American taxpayer hundreds of billions of dollars, while covering everyone in our country? Thank you.

The President. Good. Well, it's a terrific question. I'm not sure if everybody could hear it, but the gist of the question is, why have we not been looking at a single-payer plan as the way to go?

As many of you know, in many countries, most industrialized advanced countries, they have some version of what's called a single-payer plan. And what that means is essentially that the government is the insurer. The government may not necessarily hire the doctors or the hospitals—a lot of those may still be privately operated—but the government is the insurer for everybody. And Medicare is actually a single-payer plan that we have in place, but we only have it in place for our older Americans.

Now, in a lot of those countries, a single-payer plan works pretty well, and you eliminate, as Scott [Steve],* I think it was, said, you eliminate private insurers; you don't have the administrative costs and the bureaucracy and so forth.

Here's the problem, is that the way our health care system evolved in the United States, it evolved based on employers providing health insurance to their employees through private insurers. And so that's still the way that the vast majority of you get your insurance. And for us to transition completely from an employer-based system of private insurance to a single-payer system could be hugely disruptive. And my attitude has been that we should be able to find a way to create a uniquely American solution to this problem that controls costs but preserves the innovation that is introduced in part with a free market system.

I think that we can regulate the insurance companies effectively, make sure that they're not playing games with people because of preexisting conditions, that they're not charging wildly different rates to people based on where they live or what their age is, that they're not dropping people for coverage unnecessarily, that we have a public option that's available to provide competition and choice to the American people and to keep the insurers honest, and that we can provide a system in which we are, over the long term, driving down administrative costs and making sure that people are getting the best possible care at a lower price.

But I recognize that there are lot of people who are passionate—they look at France or some of these other systems, and they say, "Well, why can't we just do that?" Well, the answer is, is that this is one-sixth of our economy, and we're not suddenly just going to completely upend the system. We want to build on what works about the system and fix what's broken about the system. And that's what I think Congress is committed to doing, and I'm committed to working with them to make it happen. Okay?

Senior Adviser Jarrett. Now, how about a question from the audience.

The President. All right.

Senior Adviser Jarrett. Please, a show of hands.

The President. What I always do here is I go girl, boy, girl, boy, so that I don't get into trouble here. [*Laughter*] All right, this young lady right here—since somebody was pointing at you, so I figured—do we have a microphone for folks in the audience, is that—so that everybody can hear the question? Okay. I think there's somebody coming from this direction. There you go. You can just hand her the mike.

* White House correction.

Social Security Benefits/Health Care Reform

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. I'll try not to cry. I'm trying to figure out what I can do currently. My situation is I had renal cell carcinoma in '98 that was radiated, because my dad was dying of colon cancer at the time, and I was his health care server on his living will, so I could not be tied up having my kidney removed. So they did radiation procedures to kill the tumor then. And I had insurance, and everything was taken out.

But basically, because of the damage that the radiation did and things, I'm no longer able to work, and I have no health insurance. Now I have a new tumor. I have no way to pay for it. The doctors will not see you without paying $100 or $150 to come to their office. I can get checked into a hospital, and under their indigent program, they will run tests and release me, but that costs a lot of money.

So currently, we—I basically—Social Security will not give me disability because renal failure is no longer a qualifying factor under Social Security currently. I cannot get Medicaid through the State of Virginia, because you have to be qualified—you have to be considered disabled through Social Security to qualify for Medicaid in the State of Virginia, because I have no dependent children at home, it's just me. I get food stamps, but that's it. And I'm just trying to figure out how I'm going to make it in 9 years until I'm qualified to get my regular Social Security, now that I have a new tumor and I have nowhere to turn.

The President. Well, here, come on over here. First of all, we're going to find out what—we'll get your information, and we'll see what we can do to help you. I don't want you to feel all—like you're alone on this.

You know, without knowing all the details, I'm not going to give you an answer right now about exactly how we can help. We're going to find out what we can do within existing law. But what was your name again?

Q. My name is Debbie.

The President. Debbie. Debbie is a perfect example of somebody who we should, in a country this wealthy, be able to provide coverage for her health care problems. And what we don't want is a situation where Debbie gets worse and worse because she's not getting treatment, and then ends up having to go to the emergency room. As I said before, all of you will pay for it anyway; it's just you'll pay for it in terms of a hidden subsidy. And she's not getting the best care, and we're actually paying more than we would have if Debbie, right now, was getting treated on a regular basis by a physician who knew her history.

So, Debbie, you are exhibit A. And we appreciate you serving—sharing your story. We are going to try to find ways to help you immediately. But the long-term problem here is going to be how do we create a system in which Debbie is getting the preventive care that she needs and is able to get regular checkups, is able to get treatment in a way that is much more cost efficient than the one that we've got right now. And I'm going to make a commitment that we're going to get that done this year.

All right?

Q. Sir, July 24th through the 26th, there's a thing in Wise County, Virginia, called RAM, the Remote Area Medical, and that is—the Remote America Medical is where anybody who needs medical treatment can get free treatment for those 3 days, the 24th, 25th, and 26th——

The President. The 24th, 25th, and 26th——

Q. ——of July.

The President. Well, we will help advertise that——

Q. If you would like to showcase why there's a need. I think they treated—Governor Warner and Kaine can say how long—but I think it's 7,000 people get treatment there every day of those days that it's free.

The President. Which is a wonderful program. But I think, as Senator Warner and Governor Kaine would agree, we can't have a system that's relying on 3 days of free care and 362 days in which people don't have health care. That doesn't make any sense.

Debbie, thank you for sharing your story. We appreciate you. Thank you.

All right.

Senior Adviser Jarrett. Thank you, Debbie.

So many of the questions that are put to on the videos, Mr. President, are also very

personal. So now we're going to take another from a video.

Health Care Coverage/Small-Business Owners

Q. My mommy and daddy have small businesses, and we need health care.

Q. I actually have to work for a company so that we can get coverage because my older daughter is an automatic decline, and we're just too small of a business to be able to absorb the cost. How can health care reform help us?

Q. We have a small, and I love mommy.

The President. The—as somebody with two daughters, I'm a sucker for anybody who uses their daughter in their video. [*Laughter*] So my staff probably knew that. They figured, well, he's going to be a soft touch after that one.

Small-business owners are those who are being, in some cases, hardest hit by the rising cost of health care. And in some cases, they just can't afford to provide health insurance to their employees, and that's frustrating, but they're operating on too small a margin, or they don't have enough employees so they've got no leverage to negotiate with the insurance companies. And so the offers that insurance companies give them for the cost of coverage per person end up being way higher than they would be for big companies that have more consumer power.

In some cases, though, it's gotten so bad that small businesses, they can't even afford to provide health insurance for themselves, small-business owners. And a lot of small businesses, a huge percentage of small businesses are sole proprietorships. Maybe it's a family business; they've got one or two people working for them. And so they're like consultants out there or self-employed individuals; they just can't get a good deal.

This is an example of where this health care exchange could be so helpful, because by creating a health care exchange, part of what we want to do is to allow small businesses, as well as people who are self-employed, individuals whose companies don't provide coverage, to come to this exchange, take a look at a menu of plans that are available, join one of these plans—you may qualify for a subsidy from the Federal Government—and you then become part of a big pool that gives you some leverage over the drug companies and the insurance companies to drive down costs. And that's part of the way that health care reform can provide direct savings to American families right now, by giving them more leverage.

Look, I am very pleased that the drug companies decided to cough up $80 billion to help close this doughnut hole. I have to be honest with you, though, were it not for the prospect of serious health care reform, I don't think they would have given up that money. That's just my guess. That they—and so these same principles apply when it comes to setting up this health care exchange. If we do it effectively, then not only will families be able to make some very clear choices and small-business owners make some clear choices, about here's the best plan available for us that fits our particular needs, but they're also going to be part of a broader group that can apply some leverage in the system.

And that's essentially what Federal health care employees do. Mark Warner has a plan that all Members of Congress and Federal employees have, and it's not Cadillac care, but it's good, solid, decent care with a range of options. Part of the reason that it is a good program is because there's so many Federal employees. Well, we should provide that same kind of leverage for the small-business owner who right now is too small on their own to be able to get the best possible deal on the insurance market, and that's what we want to provide in this health care reform package. All right? Good.

Senior Adviser Jarrett. All right, I think we're ready to go back to the audience.

The President. All right, it's a guy's turn now, all right, so, ladies, you keep your hands down. [*Laughter*] All right, this young man right here. If we can get him a mike.

Health Care Reform/Federal Deficit/American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

Q. Thank you. I've been hearing a lot——

The President. What's your name?

Q. Jason Rosenbaum. Nice to meet you.

The President. Hey, Jason. What do you do, Jason?

Q. I work for a group called Health Care for America NOW.

The President. So I think the—he knows something about health care. This is like——

Q. I've been—obviously, I read the news a lot, and I've been hearing a lot about the price tag of health reform and how people are very concerned that it's going to cost a trillion dollars, and we're trying to keep it under a certain number. I'm most concerned about making it affordable, folks like me, the American people. So what do you—and like you said it's—you're committed to making this deficit neutral. So I hope you could talk a little bit about affordability and what your plans are for that.

The President. Good. Well, look, the first thing that I think is very important for people to do is to understand the costs of doing nothing, because sometimes opponents of health care reform pretend as if we've got this great thing going here and the Obama administration wants to completely upend it, just because I don't have enough to do. [*Laughter*] And I keep on trying to explain to people, look, I've got a war in Afghanistan; we haven't gotten the troops out of Iraq yet; I've got North Korea and Iran and H1N1 flu. So if the health care system was really working well, I would be happy to leave it alone.

So understand where we're at. If we don't do anything, the costs are going to keep on rising. I mean, some employers see their costs going up 8, 9, 10 percent a year. As I said, families have seen their health care costs double over the last 9 years. So you just project out 9 years from now, your wages or incomes aren't going up that fast, which means that a bigger, bigger bite is being taken out of your paycheck, even if you've got health insurance. More and more employers are saying in this very competitive atmosphere, we can't afford to do more.

So what's happened if you've got health insurance? Your employer has basically done what? They've increased deductibles; they've increased premiums. Your out-of-pocket costs have gone up by about 62 percent, and they're just going to keep on rising. And the cost of Medicare and Medicaid, because they track all these other costs, they're going to keep on skyrocketing. So our deficit will be completely out of control.

Don't let people fool you with this notion that somehow the reason for our deficit has to do with, for example, the Recovery Act. The Recovery Act was designed to make sure that local school districts didn't lay off teachers and firefighters and police officers, and it's done its job, and it's building the kind of infrastructure that we need to be competitive in the future. But it is a tiny fraction of our long-term deficit projections. Almost all of the long-term deficit projections come from increases in Medicare and Medicaid.

So the reason I say all this is because the costs are going to be there if we don't do anything. The deficit will grow if we don't do anything. Our debt will grow if we don't do anything. What I'm trying to do is figure out how do we bend the curve of costs so that we're getting more and more efficient care, higher quality care, at less cost per person. How do we eliminate the $1,000 per family that's coming out of your pocket in subsidized care, uncompensated care at hospitals that's going on right now?

And if we can do that, then, A, we can cover more people with the savings, and, B, we have more leverage over the insurance companies and the drug companies so that they give a better deal. That's what we're trying to do.

Now, I do think that we can't add to the deficit. We should find ways to honestly pay for whatever reforms we're proposing. And I already gave you an indication of how we would do it. About two-thirds of it would come from reallocating money that's currently in the system. Taxpayers, you're already paying for it, so this isn't new money coming out of your pocket. This is money that's right now being spent by the Federal Government but not spent wisely in a way that makes you healthier; that's two-thirds of it.

One-third of it, because we've got to make some initial investments up front and a lot of the savings—remember what I told you—aren't scorable, we're going to have to raise some additional revenue to make sure that people are adequately covered and we're providing some

help to families who may have health insurance but are really starting to struggle right now.

And I think the best way for us to pay for it is, as I said, capping the itemized deductions that people making over $250,000 a year, people like myself—used to be Valerie was making that, but now she's working for the Federal Government, so—[*laughter*]—she wouldn't be affected by this, capping those itemized deductions. Then we can raise enough money to pay for a good, high-quality health care reform proposal that will provide health care security for everybody.

And as I said before, many of you may be satisfied with your health care now. What you've got to do is project, if current trends continue, are you still going to be happy with your health care 5 years from now? Will you have health care 5 years from now?

A lot of people here, if you change jobs right now but you've got a preexisting condition—and just about anything these days can be called a preexisting condition—you may have trouble signing up for health care the next time around, just because you changed a job, set aside the situation where you lose a job.

One of the things that we did in the Recovery Act was to help people with COBRA. Everybody knows what COBRA is? That's the program that allows you to get health insurance—to continue your health insurance even when you lose your job. The problem is premiums are so high that most people, when you lose your job, you can't afford it. The last thing you can do is afford suddenly a $1,000 or $1,500 in premiums. So what we did was we subsidized people being able to keep their health insurance longer, cutting those COBRA costs.

I think that was a pretty smart thing to do. That was the right thing to do. But we can't just do that indefinitely. We can't do patchwork, piecemeal fixes through a Recovery Act. What we need is a permanent solution that ensures that when you lose your job or change jobs, you can still have health care; if you're self-employed, you've still got health care.

Every nation on Earth that is as wealthy as ours is able to do that. And they don't do it perfectly. That's why I say we've got to find a uniquely American solution—but don't tell me that we can't get this done. And for those who say, "Well, you know what? This is something that is very complicated, so we shouldn't rush into it," that's what happens in Congress all the time. They have hearings, they write white papers, and then suddenly the lobbyists and the special interests start going at it, and next thing you know, another 10 years has gone by and we still haven't done anything.

That's not what's going to happen this time. I am going to keep on pressing until we get it done this year. All right.

Taxes/Health Care Reform

Senior Adviser Jarrett. All right, Mr. President. So Macon just slipped me a note, and he said, right now on Facebook and on Twitter, a lot of people are talking about the proposal to tax health care benefits. So for example, Rob on Twitter said, "Does it really make sense, Mr. President, to tax me on my health care coverage?"

The President. Well, here's—let me describe for you how this argument has evolved and where I've stood on it in the past and what's being debated in Congress.

Part of the reason that employers provide health care to most American is because they get a big tax exclusion. They don't pay taxes on—and you don't pay taxes on—the health care benefits that you receive. So it's a huge subsidy that's provided through the Tax Code for employers to provide you coverage.

Now, up until, let's say, a generation ago, this worked reasonably well. It's starting to break down because even with the tax exclusion, the cost for employers, just out of pocket, paying the insurers, is getting more and more expensive.

Some people have said that what we should do is just eliminate this tax exclusion so that the Federal Government isn't indirectly subsidizing employers providing care, and that we could take that money and then just give everybody a tax break individually and then they could go out and shop for their own health

care. This was essentially John McCain's proposal during the campaign. I mean, I want to be fair to it. The idea was, you eliminate the exclusion; the billions of dollars that come back into the Treasury are then given out to each person in the form of a $5,000 or a $7,000 tax credit, and then you go out and you buy your own insurance.

And the thinking is that if you do it that way, then each of you are going to be more discriminating consumers, and you are going to go out and get the best possible deal, and you won't be overusing the health care system. You won't be going to the doctor unnecessarily or taking drugs that you don't really need. And you will be the—you will essentially engage in self-rationing. That's really the concept behind this idea.

Now, in fairness, the other notion is, is that if you don't have your health care tied to employers, then you're not going to be as worried about losing your health insurance if you change your job because the money follows you as opposed to being with the employer. So that's the concept.

Now, I opposed this during the campaign, and I opposed it for a couple of reasons. Number one, if you completely eliminated the exclusion, there is no doubt that what would happen is, is that a lot of employers would stop providing health care. And so a lot of people who currently get health care through their employers wouldn't be able to get it. The second thing: Remember what I told you earlier about how if you are on your own shopping for health care, you've got no leverage with the insurance company. Well, the problem is, is that if suddenly now you get a tax credit for $5,000 or $7,000, you try to go buy some health insurance for your family and it costs $14,000, you're a lot worse off than you would have been. You're out of luck. And you've got no leverage; they've got no incentive to give you a lower price because you're on your own.

The other thing—the other problem is that when you're not part of a pool, the insurance companies have every incentive to make sure that if you are older or you are sicker, that they do not cover you. They want to cover the young, healthy folks like Mark Warner. That's who they want. But if you're older or sicker, you are more likely to be excluded from coverage, or they really jack up the rates. When you're part of a pool, then the insurers say, "Well, I guess we'll take the older, sicker folks because we're also getting the younger, healthier folks at the same time."

So for all those reasons, I opposed the proposal that was put forward, because essentially it would be, for the first time, taxing the health care benefits that are provided by employers.

Now, nobody at this point is—or not many folks are talking about taxing benefits or completely eliminating the exclusion. What they are calling for now in Congress is to cap the exclusion so that people who have very high-priced health care, at a certain point, they can only get a deduction up to a certain point, right? So let's say that the average health care cost for families—a good health care plan costs $13,000. What they would say is, the employer and the employee get an exclusion up to $13,000, but if you get some Cadillac plan that costs $17,000, then what we're going to do is you're going to have to pay taxes on that last $4,000. And the idea that is being debated in Congress right now is, is that a good way to ensure that people don't have these big Cadillac plans, but instead have more sensible plans. Now, I don't think—and by the way, that also raises some money. So this has been offered as an alternative way to pay for that extra one-third of health care that we're not able to pay for through simply reallocating money.

I think the better way to do it remains the proposal I have to cap itemized deductions. I think that is a way that we can ensure that people who currently have health care aren't suddenly seeing the costs go up to pay for other people's costs going down, but instead everybody's costs can go down effectively.

But this is something that's going to be debated in the House and the Senate. Mark Warner is going to have to weigh in on it. We're all going to have to weigh in on it. My bottom line, though, is that if you've got health insurance right now, you shouldn't suddenly see your costs go up as part of health care reform.

Okay? Good.

Senior Adviser Jarrett. All right, Mr. President, I think we're teed up for another video question.

The President. All right.

Medical Malpractice Insurance

Q. Mr. President, as a physician, I know the cost of defensive medicine drives medical costs upward. Now, at your health care forum, you said that you wanted to find out what works. In my home State of Texas, we know what works, and our Medical Justice Act has done just that.

Now, unfortunately, when you recently told the AMA you were opposed to capping noneconomic damages, even though a State like mine has proven that it does work. Now, will you reaffirm your commitment to find out what works and then ask Congress for its implementation?

The President. Okay. I want to make sure everybody understands the question here. A lot of doctors have argued, and in some cases they're justified, that their costs for medical malpractice insurance, the threat of a lawsuit if something goes wrong with a patient, even if it's not their fault, is so high that not only is it increasing their out-of-pocket cost, but they're also engaging in what's called defensive medicine; that they've got to order five tests, when one's enough, just to make sure that they're covered so that if something goes wrong that's not their fault later, they can say, "Look, I did everything possible, even if a lot of that isn't required." And so the argument is, if you cap the pain and suffering or the liability that is awarded as a consequence of you being hurt in the hospital or by a doctor, that that would drive down everybody's costs.

Now, what I've said is that I don't like the idea of an artificial cap on somebody if the doctor or the hospital really was negligent. And in some cases, I've got to tell you, they are. I mean, there are cases where folks leave a sponge in your gut and sew you back up, and after a while you're feeling worse than when you went in. And in some cases, obviously, that can cause very severe damage, and I want to make sure that people's pain, suffering, out-of-pocket expenses, that those are covered.

So I don't like the idea of just an artificial cap. I do want to work with doctors to find ways that we can reduce their liabilities where they haven't done anything wrong, where they've performed effectively. I want to see, are there ways that we can reduce the constant threat of lawsuits that doctors and hospitals experience, because I do think that that causes defensive medicine. And so I've committed to working with the AMA to see ways that we can reduce some of these litigation costs and malpractice rates.

One point that I've got to dispute, though, with the gentleman who asked me the question—he says he's from Texas, and that "We've got caps in Texas, and so we've seen what works." Well, the fact is, is that there was just recently an article about a town called McAllen, Texas, where they have the highest health care costs in the country. It's down by the border. And even though they have caps there, in McAllen, Texas, they spend about three times as much per person as—or not—they spend about 30 percent more per person than they do in El Paso, Texas, which also is operating under caps. So what that tells me is the problem of rising costs doesn't simply have to do with whether or not liability is capped. What it really has to do with is the incentives that are operating in various communities.

There are some places, like the Mayo Clinic, many of you have heard of, provides outstanding care, some of the best in the world. People fly in from everywhere to go to Mayo Clinic to get treated. Turns out Mayo provides care much more cheaply than a lot of other health systems, even though it's better care. And part of the reason is they do some things that are commonsensical, but unfortunately we don't do in the health care system.

For example, instead of you going to one—your primary care physician, who has you do a bunch of tests, then refers you to a specialist who has you do a bunch of tests, then maybe you go to a third specialist, another bunch of tests; go to the hospital, they retest you. What they do is, at Mayo Clinic, when you meet with the—your primary physician, he calls in all the specialists all at the same time, and as a team, they evaluate you, do all

the tests right there, so you're not duplicating a whole bunch of stuff. And that coordinated care drives down costs tremendously.

That's the kind of commonsense approach that we're going to have to take. And one of the things that we're going to need to do in the health reform that we're proposing is to incentivize those kinds of smart practices coordinating care, as opposed to what we do right now, which is we just pay you—the more services you provide, the more we pay you, which gives doctors and hospitals a pretty strong incentive to test you five times instead of one time. I'm not saying they do it consciously, but right now we're preventing them from coordinating in a smart fashion because of the ways that we reimburse. That has to be part of the reform that we initiate.

All right.

Ms. Jarrett. All right, Mr. President, I'm getting the high sign, so how about one more question from our wonderful audience?

The President. One more question from the audience. Let's see. It's a girl's turn, isn't it? I think so. This young lady right here.

Health Care Reform

Q. Hi, Mr. President. I'm a member of SEIU, and I'm down here in Fairfax County working on Change That Works. What can I do, as a member of the union, to help you with your reform bill?

The President. Well, I appreciate the question. The most important thing I think the American people can do right now is to just be informed. Tell your friends, tell your neighbors to get informed about what's happening in the health care system right now. It's very complicated, and I don't expect everybody to be an expert, but I want everybody to be well enough informed that the scare tactics of those who would oppose reform don't work.

So for—when you hear somebody say this is—"Obama's proposing a Government takeover of health care," that's an old argument that's been used for years. I just want to be clear: If you've got a health care plan that you get through your employer or some other private plan, I want you to keep it. I actually think reforming the system is the most likely way for you to keep the health care that you've got. I don't want to take it over. I think it's great that you can keep the care that you've got.

All I've said is, I want to make sure that those things that taxpayers are paying for, that we're getting our money's worth. I don't want to provide $177 billion in subsidies to insurance companies. I don't want to reimburse for five tests when the evidence shows that you just getting one test is going to be better for you, because that means that the taxpayers are saving money and I can use that to lower your costs, or to help somebody who doesn't have health care at all.

I do think we should have a public plan to compete with the private plans. But these private insurance companies, they're always telling me what a great deal that they give to the American consumer. If it's such a great deal, why are they worried about competing against the public plan, especially when they say government can't do anything?

So they'll tell you that we're trying to take over health care. I don't want to take over health care. They'll tell you that we're going to try to ration the system. We don't want to get between you and your doctor. What we do believe is that if there's good evidence out there that shows that the best way to treat your illness is to give you the blue pill, and instead right now you're getting prescribed the red pill that costs twice as much, I think that you and your doctor, having that information, are probably going to decide to go with the cheaper pill that does just as good of a job and that will save you money. That's not rationing; that's being sensible.

So whenever you start hearing these arguments about socialized medicine, government takeover, rationing, Canada-style health care, what I need you to do—and I need everybody here to do and everybody who's watching to do—is to actually pay attention to the argument, and don't let people scare you out of reforming a system that we know is not working.

America, one of the great things about this country is we've got a system that's sometimes kind of hard to change. Congress gets kind of bogged down, and part of that is because of the way the Constitution is designed. It's served us well because it keeps us very stable. We don't

have coups and all kinds of governments collapsing all the time. But the disadvantage sometimes is, is that it's hard for us to make big, bold steps. But the great thing about the system is that, every once in a while, when we finally hit a point where things just aren't working at all, we are able to generate the political will to finally get things done.

That's how we got Social Security. After the Great Depression, nobody had any pensions or protection, and people started realizing, we can't have a country where suddenly older Americans are just on the streets, after working hard all their lives. And finally we got Social Security. And then people said, "Well, we can't have older Americans who don't have any health care," and we got Medicare. At every juncture, when we finally need to make a change, we make a change. This is one of those times.

So don't be scared about the future; let's embrace the future; let's go after the future. If we do, then I'm confident that we can create a health care system that gives you choice, allows you to keep your doctor, drives down costs, makes sure that every American doesn't have to worry if they lose or change their jobs. That's our aim; that's our goal. We're going to make it happen this year.

Thank you, everybody. I appreciate you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:28 p.m. at Northern Virginia Community College. In his remarks, he referred to Robert G. Templin, president, Northern Virginia Community College; Glenn DuBois, chancellor, Virginia Community College System; cancer patient Laura Klitzka, her husband Pete, and their children Taylor and Logan; and Sen. John McCain, 2008 Republican Presidential candidate.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Business Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters
July 2, 2009

The President. Good afternoon, everybody. I just held a meeting with the CEOs of some of the most innovative energy companies in America to talk about growth and progress of a sector that represents a big piece of America's economic future. As our economy adapts to the challenges of a new century, new ways of producing and saving and distributing energy offer a unique opportunity to create millions of jobs for the American people.

And obviously, this is a timely discussion, on a day of sobering news. The job figures released this morning show that we lost 467,000 jobs last month. And while the average loss of about 4,000 [400,000]* jobs per month this quarter is less devastating than the 700,000 per month that we lost in the previous quarter, and while there are continuing signs that the recession is slowing, obviously, this is little comfort to all those Americans who've lost their jobs.

Now, we've taken some extraordinary measures to blunt the hard edges of the worst recession of our lifetime and to offer assistance to those who've borne the brunt of this economic storm. But as I've said from the moment that I walked into the door of this White House, it took years for us to get into this mess, and it will take us more than a few months to turn it around.

And that's why the discussion that we had today is so important. It's men and women like these who will help lead us out of this recession and into a better future. My job, and our job as a government, is to do whatever we can to unleash the great, generative powers of the American economy by encouraging their efforts.

And I'm absolutely confident that we can, at this period of difficulty, prove once again what this Nation can achieve when challenged. And I'm confident that we're not only going to

* White House correction.

recover from this recession in the short term, but we're going to prosper in the long term. To do that, we have to act now to build a new foundation for lasting growth. And energy is one of the pillars of this new foundation, essential both to our recovery and our long-term prosperity.

I'm pleased to say that we've achieved more in the last few months to create a new clean energy economy than we had achieved in many decades before. The recovery plan will double our country's supply of renewable energy and is already creating new clean energy jobs. Thanks to a remarkable partnership between automakers, autoworkers, environmental advocates, and States, we also set in motion a new national policy to increase gas mileage and decrease carbon pollution for all new cars and trucks sold in this country, which is going to save us 1.8 billion barrels of oil.

And last Friday, the House of Representatives passed an extraordinary piece of legislation that would make renewable energy the profitable kind of energy in America. It will reduce our dependence on foreign oil. It will prevent the worst consequences of climate change. And above all, it holds the promise of millions of new jobs, jobs, by the way, that can't be outsourced.

The CEOs standing behind me know a lot about these kinds of companies. These are folks whose companies are helping to lead the transformation towards a clean energy future. Even as we face tough economic times, even as we continue to lose jobs, the CEOs here told me that they're looking to hire new people, in some cases to double or even triple in size over the next few years. They are making money, and they are helping their customers save money on the energy front.

So these companies are vivid examples of the kind of future we can create, but it's now up to the Senate to continue the work that was begun in the House to forge this more prosperous future. We're going to need to set aside the posturing and the politics. And when we put aside the old ideological debates, then our choice is clear. It's a choice between slow decline and renewed prosperity; it's a choice between the past and the future.

The American people, I believe, want us to make the right choice, and I'm confident that the Senate will. For at every juncture in our history, we've chosen to seize big opportunities rather than fear big challenges. We've chosen to take responsibility. We've chosen to honor the sacrifices of those who came before us and fulfill our obligations to generations to come. That's what we're going to do this time as well.

Thank you very much, everybody.

Small Businesses

Q. Mr. President, do you have a message for the small businesses on health and economy?

The President. The message for small businesses is, many of these businesses started as small businesses, and they're now getting to be big businesses because of the extraordinary opportunities that are out there. Another message is that they should probably contact some of these CEOs because it turns out, they can save small businesses and large businesses alike up to 20 or 30 percent on their energy usage.

And when you hear the innovation that's taking place, everything from LED lighting that can save a huge amount on energy costs to new concrete materials that last longer and are waterproofed from the inside out—and that can mean that bridges and roads and buildings can last 20 or 30 years longer than using conventional concrete. When you look at what's being done with solar energy right now in places like Houston and Florida and the fact that many of these companies are exporting their goods and their services, but unfortunately, their biggest markets right now are Europe and Japan because we haven't done enough to emphasize clean energy in our own country, that gets you excited about the future.

And one of the things that I've consistently talked about since I took office, and on a day where we see that our economy is still having a tough time getting moving, is we're going to have to shoot for the future and not look backwards. So much of the debate around health care, so much of the debate around energy, has been based on this idea that somehow if we stand still and we don't do anything that we're going to be better off. And that's just not how

this world works. It's certainly not how the modern economy works.

We know we're going to have to change how we use energy. We know we're going to have to change how we operate our health care systems. We know that we're going to have to change how we train our young people to compete in this new global economy. And so to make the argument that somehow we should just lock in on the status quo or perpetuate the same policies that got us into this mess in the first place, and that that somehow is going to solve our problems, just doesn't make any sense.

And what these folks are all about is the future, and that's what America has always been about. We are not folks who are scared of the future or look backwards. We always meet the challenges by moving forward. And that's what I think is going to happen this time as well.

Thanks, guys.

White House Energy Efficiency

Q. Mr. President, when are you going to get solar panels and a wind turbine at the White House, sir?

The President. I was just talking to Secretary Chu about how he is going to consult with these outstanding folks to figure out how we can improve energy efficiency here.

Q. When will that happen, Mr. President?

The President. I just told you; we're moving. Come on, guys. [*Laughter*] I don't have a date certain.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:37 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Energy Steven Chu.

Statement on Senate Action on Health Care Reform Legislation
July 2, 2009

For decades, Washington has failed to act as health care costs continued to rise, crushing businesses, families, and placing an unsustainable burden on governments. Today the Senate HELP Committee has produced legislation that lowers costs, protects choice of doctors and plans, and assures quality and affordable health care for Americans. The Congressional Budget Office has now issued a more complete review of this bill, concluding that it will cost less and cover more Americans than originally estimated. It also contains provisions that will protect the coverage Americans get at work. When merged with the Senate Finance Committee's companion pieces, the Senate will be prepared to vote for health reform legislation that does not add to the deficit, reduces health care costs, and covers 97% of Americans.

The HELP Committee legislation reflects many of the principles I've laid out, such as reforms that will prohibit insurance companies from refusing coverage for people with preexisting conditions and the concept of insurance exchanges where individuals can find affordable coverage if they lose their jobs, move, or get sick. Such a marketplace would allow families and some small businesses the benefit of one-stop shopping for their health care coverage and enable them to compare price and quality and pick the plan that best suits their needs.

Among the choices that would be available in the exchange would be a public health insurance option. The public option would make health care affordable by increasing competition, providing more choices, and keeping the insurance companies honest. The legislation also improves the quality of patient care, improves safety for patients, and strengthens the commitment to preventive health care, preventing people from getting sick in the first place.

I thank Chairman Kennedy, Senator Dodd, and all the members of the HELP Committee for their hard work on health reform.

Statement on the 45th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act
July 2, 2009

Forty-five years ago today, President Johnson signed into law historic legislation that moved America closer toward fulfilling the dream of our founding, a dream of opportunity, equality, and justice for all. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 ended legal discrimination, helping grant all Americans equal justice under the law, no matter what their gender or the color of their skin.

The Civil Rights Act was born during Freedom Summer 1963, but its passage was only possible because generations of Americans of all backgrounds stood up, sat down, and marched in freedom's cause. Once it was signed into law, a renewed pledge was made to all Americans not to deny any man a seat at a lunch counter, not to deny any woman an opportunity in the workplace, and not to deny any child a chance to make the most of their God-given potential.

But while the Civil Rights Act opened doors of freedom and opportunity, we know that far too many inequities and barriers remain in the African American community and across this country. And we must continue to break down these barriers in our laws, our policies, and our hearts so that we cannot only fulfill the full promise of the Civil Rights Act, but perfect the Union that our Founders created 233 years ago this week.

The President's Weekly Address
July 4, 2009

Hello and happy Fourth of July, everybody. This weekend is a time to get together with family and friends, kick back, and enjoy a little time off. And I hope that's exactly what all of you do, but I also want to take a moment today to reflect on what I believe is the meaning of this distinctly American holiday.

Today we are called to remember not only the day our country was born, we're also called to remember the indomitable spirit of the first American citizens who made that day possible. We are called to remember how unlikely it was that our American experiment would succeed at all, that a small band of patriots would declare independence from a powerful empire, and that they would form, in the new world, what the old world had never known, a government of, by, and for the people.

That unyielding spirit is what defines us as Americans. It's what led generations of pioneers to blaze a westward trail. It's what led my grandparents' generation to persevere in the face of a depression and triumph in the face of tyranny. It's what led generations of American workers to build an industrial economy unrivalled around the world. It's what has always led us, as a people, not to wilt or cower at a difficult moment, but to face down any trial and rise to any challenge, understanding that each of us has a hand in writing America's destiny.

That is the spirit we are called to show once more. We're facing an array of challenges on a scale unseen in our time. We're waging two wars. We're battling a deep recession. And our economy, and our Nation itself, are endangered by festering problems we have kicked down the road for far too long: spiraling health care costs, inadequate schools, and a dependence on foreign oil.

Meeting these extraordinary challenges will require an extraordinary effort on the part of every American. And that is an effort we cannot defer any longer. Now is the time to lay a new foundation for growth and prosperity. Now is the time to revamp our education system, demand more from teachers, parents, and students alike and build schools that prepare every child in America to outcompete any worker in the world.

Now is the time to reform an unsustainable health care system that is imposing crushing costs on families, businesses—large and small—as well as State and Federal budgets. We need to protect what works, fix what's

broken, and bring down costs for all Americans. No more talk. No more delay. Health care reform must happen this year.

And now is the time to meet our energy challenge, one of the greatest challenges we have ever confronted as a people or as a planet. For the sake of our economy and our children, we must build on the historic bill passed by the House of Representatives and make clean energy the profitable kind of energy so that we can end our dependence on foreign oil and reclaim America's future.

These are some of the challenges that our generation has been called to meet. And yet there are those who would have us try what has already failed, who would defend the status quo. They argue that our health care system is fine the way it is and that a clean energy economy can wait. They say we are trying to do too much, that we are moving too quickly, and that we all ought to just take a deep breath and scale back our goals.

These naysayers have short memories. They forget that we, as a people, did not get here by standing pat in a time of change. We did not get here by doing what was easy. That's not how a cluster of 13 Colonies became the United States of America.

We are not a people who fear the future. We are a people who make it. And on this July 4th, we need to summon that spirit once more. We need to summon the same spirit that inhabited Independence Hall 233 years ago today.

That's how this generation of Americans will make its mark on history. That's how we will make the most of this extraordinary moment, and that's how we will write the next chapter in the great American story. Thank you, and happy Fourth of July.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:30 p.m. on July 2 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on July 4. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 3, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on July 4.

Remarks at an Independence Day Celebration
July 4, 2009

Welcome to the White House, and happy Fourth of July. Michelle and I are honored and proud to have you here on the Fourth. And we're humbled to be joined up here by heroes, men and women who went beyond the call of duty in battle, some selflessly risking their lives again and again so that others might live. True to form, they, like all of you, say they were just doing their job. That's what makes you the best of us, and that's why we simply want to say thank you to each and every one of you for your extraordinary service to our country.

We're joined in that sentiment by Vice President Joe Biden, who, as many of you know, is marking Independence Day with troops in Iraq, and Jill Biden, who's spending it with military families in Germany.

I should say that there's also one girl in particular who's just thrilled that all of you are here, and that is Malia Obama, because this happens to be her birthday as well. When she was younger, I used to say that all these fireworks were for her. [*Laughter*] I'm not sure she still buys that, but, even if this backyard is a little bit unique, our gathering tonight is not so different from gatherings that are taking place all across the country, in parks and fields and backyards all across America. In small towns and big cities, folks are firing up grills, laughing with family and friends, and laying out a blanket in preparation for the big show. They're reliving the simple, unmistakable joys of being an American.

But I suspect they're also taking some time to reflect on the unique nature of what it means to be an American; to give thanks for the extraordinary blessings that we enjoy; to celebrate and uphold the ideas and values that have invigorated and sustained this democracy and made it the lasting beacon for all of the world.

Just imagine the extraordinary audacity it took 233 years ago for a group of patriots to

cast off the title of subject for citizen and put ideas to paper that were as simple as they were revolutionary: that we are equal; that we are free; that we can pursue our full measure of happiness and make of our lives what we will.

In retrospect, it seems inevitable. But I think it's fair to say that even the Framers of that declaration—especially the Framers of that declaration—would be astonished to see the results of their improbable experiment: a nation of commerce that led future revolutions in industry and information; a nation of discovery that blazed a trail west, cured disease, and put a man on the Moon; a nation of progress that strives perpetually to perfect itself; and a nation of hope that has again and again inspired people the world over to reach for the same freedoms we hold so dear.

And at each and every moment, generations of brave and selfless men and women like those standing alongside me have defended those freedoms and served our country with honor, waging war so that we might know peace, braving hardship so that we might know opportunity, and sometimes, paying the ultimate price so we might know freedom.

You are the latest, strongest link in that unbroken chain that stretches back to the Continental Army. You're the heirs of that legacy of proud men and women who strained to hold together a young union; who rolled back the creeping tide of tyranny; who stood post through a long twilight struggle; who have taken on the terror and extremism that threatens the world's stability.

And because of your brave efforts, American troops this week transferred control of all Iraqi cities and towns in Iraq's Government to Iraqi security forces. Because of what you did—[*applause*]—because the courage and capability and commitment of every single American who has served in Iraq, a sovereign and united Iraq is taking control of its own destiny.

Iraq's future now rests in the hands of its own people. As extraordinary an accomplishment as that is, we know that this transition won't be without problems. We know there will be difficult days ahead. And that's why we will remain a strong partner to the Iraqi people on behalf of their security and prosperity.

But I want to say this to all of you: You have done everything that has been asked of you. The United States of America is proud of you. I'm proud to be your Commander in Chief. And that's why, this Fourth of July, I renew my pledge to each and every one of you that for as long as I have that immeasurable honor, you will always have the equipment and support you need to get the job done. Your families will always be a priority of Michelle's and mine and remain on our hearts and on our minds. And when our servicemembers do return home, it will be to an America that always welcomes them home with the care that they were promised.

It is, after all, your service, the service of generations of soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coast guardsmen, that makes our annual celebration of this day possible. It's your service that proves that our founding ideals remain just as powerful and alive in our third century as a nation as they did on that first Fourth of July. And it is your service that guarantees that the United States of America shall forever remain the last, best hope on Earth.

So happy Fourth of July, everybody. Right now the Marine Band is going to pay tribute to your service with a few songs that I think you know.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:06 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Biden.

Interview With ITAR–TASS/Rossiya TV
July 2, 2009

Q. Mr. President, thank you very much for having us today.

The President. Thanks.

Q. It's your first interview for the Russian media.

The President. Yes.

Q. And it will be on air in TV Channel Russia on the Fourth of July. Congratulations, sir.

The President. Thank you so much. Thank you very much, and I'm very much looking forward to visiting Russia on Monday.

The President's Visit to Russia

Q. You're leaving for Russia, and it will be your second time there. What's your personal sense of Russia?

The President. Well, I had a wonderful time when we visited both Moscow and Perm; this was several years ago. I was traveling as a Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, interested in issues of nuclear proliferation. The people were very warm; we had a wonderful reception. I had a wonderful time visiting Red Square and the Kremlin.

I think that traveling there as President, obviously, is very different, and now those issues that I was interested in as a Senator, of nuclear proliferation, how we can reduce tensions and conflicts between our countries, I'm in a position, hopefully, to get more accomplished than my first visit.

Russia/Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. And what we in Russia can expect from the new American leader? How you see the role of the Russia in the world?

The President. Well, look, Russia is a great country with an extraordinary culture and extraordinary traditions. It remains one of the most powerful countries in the world and has, I think, enormous potential for being a force for stability and prosperity in the international community.

I think that there has been a time over the last several years where Russian-U.S. relations were not as strong as they should be. What I said coming in is that I wanted to press the reset button on relations between the United States and Russia. And I think the possibilities for our cooperation on economic issues, on defense issues, dealing with the threat of terrorism in both our countries, our ability to deal constructively with issues like Iran, increasing trade and commercial relations, those are all issues that are important.

And the main thing that I want to communicate to Russian leadership and the Russian people is America's respect for Russia, that we want to deal as equals. We are both nuclear superpowers; with that comes special responsibilities that are very different from the positions of many other countries around the world, and we have to handle those responsibilities in a way that encourages peace.

Russia's Leadership

Q. You will spend a couple hours with Dmitry Medvedev; you will meet with Vladimir Putin. What your opinion, how important the personal chemistry between leaders?

The President. I think it's very important. Ultimately, it's hard to do business with somebody unless there's some sense of trust and understanding of what the other person is thinking, what is important to the other person. And so I always like to spend time one on one, not just with a big delegation and everybody taking notes, but just having a conversation.

I've found President Medvedev to be a very thoughtful, forward-looking individual. I think that he is doing a fine job in leading Russia into the 21st century.

I have not had a chance to meet Prime Minister Putin before, but obviously, he's been a very strong leader for the Russian people. And my hope is, is that I will come away from this meeting with a better sense of their concerns, their policies, and hopefully, they will get a sense that I'm somebody that they can do business with in an effective way.

Nuclear Arms Reduction

Q. START Treaty, we all hope that you will find a decision through the end of this year, but what steps after that?

The President. Well, I think our first step is to provide a framework for the post-START treaty. And my goal is that both countries reduce their nuclear stockpiles in a way that doesn't leave either country with an advantage, but reduces tensions and the expense of maintaining such high nuclear stockpiles when

they're not necessary for our defense and our deterrence.

And if we can get the framework during this summit, then we will be able to advance a treaty by the end of December. There are other issues that I want to make sure that we discuss that have to do with our mutual security. As I said before, I think the issue of nuclear proliferation remains very important, and we need to create a strong nonproliferation framework in the international community. Having Russia as a leader on that is going to be critical. I think counterterrorism activities, ways we can cooperate together, that will be very important.

But given the unique position the United States and Russia has when it comes to nuclear power, for us to send a strong signal that we want to reduce our stockpiles, I think, would help us internationally, to give people a sense that we're moving into a new era and we want to get beyond the cold war.

U.S. Role in World Affairs

Q. For the new President, your plate is awfully full. Too many challenges: economic crisis, Afghanistan, Iraq, North Korea—too many challenges. What's happened with lady luck? [*Laughter*] And what you think the role of America in the world? Share with us, please, the Obama doctrine.

The President. Well, first of all, it's true that we are coming in with unprecedented challenges, at least in the modern era. Probably the last time we saw so many difficult challenges facing America was during the 1930s and the Great Depression. And the way that we're trying to handle it is to send a clear message to the American people that it took us a while to get into some of these problems; they're not going to be solved overnight, but we can make steady progress and continually improve and move towards the future.

In terms of, I think, the U.S.'s role in the world, obviously, we remain a military superpower. We still have the largest economy in the world, but the world is becoming more integrated. You've got countries like China and India and Brazil that are much more developed and growing much more quickly than in the past. And so I think the United States has to recognize that our role is not to dictate policy around the world, but to be a partner with other countries around the world and find those areas of mutual concern and agreement that are so important.

And a great example of this is the issue of climate change. This is an issue that could have profound impacts on both the United States and on Russia. If the permafrost in Russia completely melts, it could completely transform the weather patterns on the planet, in some cases in very dangerous ways.

And the problem is, no one country can solve this country. The United States has to take steps; China has to take steps; Russia has to take steps; India has to take steps. And so I hope that the United States role will be to help convene and moderate negotiations that lead the international community to move in a direction that's good for all people and not just for a few.

The Presidency

Q. Yesterday one of the most popular Russian radio channel, Echo of Moscow, asked its audience, what you want to ask President Obama? There was more than 10,000 questions during only yesterday. The most popular was—and it was—first was sent by one engineer from Perm, city where you visited before, and I will read this question: What Mr. Obama feel when he realized that the whole world may depend sometime of choosing his decision to press or not to press a button?

The President. Well, I think that——

Q. It's not my question.

The President. No, I understand.

Q. It's a question of audience.

The President. It's an excellent question. I think that when you are elected as the President of the United States—and I'm sure this is true if you are elected as President of Russia or other powerful countries around the world—you realize what an extraordinary responsibility it is. And I think that you have to have confidence in your ability to make good decisions, but you also have to have humility and to understand that you are just one man and that nobody is perfect.

And so I spend a lot of time making sure that I have good advisers, that I'm getting information from a lot of different sources, so that any

decisions I make I've thought through all the opinions, including those of my critics, so that I can feel confident that I'm making the best decision possible.

But I always feel very humbled by the position that I'm in, and I'm grateful for the American people giving me this extraordinary opportunity.

The President's Success

Q. When you decided to run for President, it looked like that you had no chance, but you win.

The President. Yes.

Q. I have a Russian edition of your book "Audacity of Hope." This is for you, Mr. President.

The President. Oh, thank you so much.

Q. And tell me, what gave you the audacity of hope?

The President. You know, when I think back, I think my mother was such an important figure in my life. I grew up without a father in the household, but my mother gave me love and support and confidence that I could do anything that I put my mind to doing. And I think that if there's one person who is responsible for my success, it would have to be her.

The President's Heroes

Q. During the campaign, you were compared with many leaders: with Abraham Lincoln, with Jack Kennedy, with Mr. Roosevelt. I don't like comparisons. Obama is Obama. But who are your heroes?

The President. Well, you just named some of them. Abraham Lincoln is probably the President who I find most compelling, because not only did he deal with probably the biggest crisis in American history, the Civil War, but he also did so in a way that was full of understanding of humanity. And his willingness to, I think, understand other people, from slaves to slave owners, and try to hold people together even when we were in the midst of war, I think, is extraordinary.

Internationally, Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi. I always am interested in leaders who are able to bring about transformative change without resort to violence, but rather changing people's minds and people's hearts.

The President's Golf Game

Q. I can honestly—you are very, very famous as a very cool man. But what don't you like about yourself?

The President. Oh, you know, I have been playing golf lately, and I don't like my golf swing. [*Laughter*] I don't—if they—I don't how much—you probably don't have that much golf weather in Russia, but it's a game that I keep on thinking I should be good at, and somehow the ball goes this way and that way and never goes straight. [*Laughter*]

Life in the White House

Q. You know, for the whole world, White House symbol of power: White House announce, White House declare, White House decided. But for you, White House is a home.

The President. Yes.

Q. How comfortable your family—your wife, your daughters, first of all, your mother-in-law—[*laughter*]—feel here in White House as a new home?

The President. Well, you know, we've gotten used to it. When we first got here, obviously, it's much bigger and fancier than anything that we had lived in in the past. And what we've discovered is, is that—the second and the third floor is where we live, and it is actually a very comfortable space. And the people, the staffs are just wonderful and very supportive.

What I haven't gotten used to is still the difference of being President, where you can't just go down to the street and go to the local restaurant or go to the——

Q. But you visited a restaurant 2 weeks ago.

The President. Yes, we did, but these days now I have 15 Secret Service cars—[*laughter*]—and helicopters, and so I miss, sometimes, being able to just walk around like an ordinary person. But it's a small sacrifice to make for the privilege.

The First Lady

Q. Well, I tell you a secret, Mr. President. Maybe you don't know, but your wife, Michelle, may be more popular in Russia than you. You know why?

The President. Why?

Q. Because of the garden kitchen.

The President. Oh.

Q. Because kitchen gardens very popular in Russia, and when she started to make a kitchen garden around the White House, she became very popular.

But historically, role of the First Lady very important in the United States. What do you think about her role in your Presidency?

The President. Well, she's done just an extraordinary job. Her first role is to make sure that our children are doing well. And our two girls, Malia and Sasha, are just special young ladies, and they have made the adjustment very well, and that's because Michelle is such a good mother.

Her second job is to make sure that I don't get too cocky. [*Laughter*] She keeps—she always makes sure that—she reminds me of all the things that I can improve on.

And then she's also, I think, been an inspiration to a lot of women here in the United States who combine careers with parenting. I think she is somebody who they can identify with because she's had to balance a lot of different issues. So she's doing a marvelous job. I'm very, very proud of her.

The President's Interests

Q. Very briefly, you are well known not like a great writer, but also like a great reader. What's your favorite literature, maybe in Russia, your favorite music, your favorite song, your favorite movie?

The President. Well, you know, I think Russia has so many great writers; poets like Pushkin I love; "War and Peace" is still one of the greatest novels of all time; Dostoevsky. So I'm a big fan of Russian literature.

In terms of music, I have a very wide mix. I like classical like Bach, but I also like hip-hop and some modern music.

And favorite movies? I'm biased towards old American movies: "The Godfather," "Casablanca," the classics.

The President's Message to the Russian People

Q. Mr. President, thank you very, very much for this talk. We all wish you and Mr. Medvedev great success to reset Russian-American relationship. And maybe you'll use this opportunity to say a few words to millions of Russian audience in Russia and all over the world.

The President. Well, I think the most important thing is to thank the Russian people for their warmth and hospitality. They are an extraordinary people and an extraordinary culture, and I am very much looking forward to my visit to Moscow in the next few days.

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President. And before we leave, I want to present you this traditional Russian doll.

The President. Thank you.

Q. It's most popular toy——

The President. Look at this. [*Laughter*]

Q. ——in Moscow streets now.

The President. Yes. I like this. [*Laughter*]

Q. You'll get many more there, but this will be the first.

The President. Absolutely. Look at this.

Q. All Democrats inside.

The President. You've got only Democrats. [*Laughter*]

Q. Only Democrats inside. No Republicans. [*Laughter*]

The President. Excellent. Thank you so much.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

NOTE: The interview began at 12:25 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa. A reporter referred to the President's mother-in-law Marian Robinson. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 5. Audio was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia in Moscow, Russia
July 6, 2009

President Medvedev. Mr. President Barack, distinguished members of the American delegation, on this occasion, I would like to welcome you in the Kremlin. And it is our expectation that during the deliberations we will have today and tomorrow, we'll have a full-fledged discussion of the relations between our two countries, closing some of the pages of the past and opening some the pages of the future.

So among those difficult questions our countries are tackling together are those pertaining to economy, security, and the strategic offensive armaments. And it is my hope that it will be possible for us to tackle successfully this problem jointly and to—[*inaudible*].

So once again, I'd like to welcome you and to wish you success.

President Obama. Thank you. Well, let me just thank President Medvedev and his entire delegation for their extraordinary hospitality. We are confident that we can continue to build off the excellent discussions that we had in London, and that on a whole host of issues, including security issues, economic issues, energy issues, environmental issues, that the United States and Russia have more in common than they have differences, and that if we work hard during these next few days, that we can make extraordinary progress that will benefit the people of both countries.

So we are very much looking forward to our meetings, and again, I want to thank not only you, Mr. President, but the people of Russia for hosting us today. We're very glad to be in Moscow.

President Medvedev. Even the weather favors such an intercourse between us, since it's going to be chilly outside, and it's better to work inside.

President Obama. We might as well be inside today. [*Laughter*] Although the last time I was here in Moscow, it was 80 degrees.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:47 p.m. in the Kremlin. President Medvedev spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Joint Statement Between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Afghanistan
July 6, 2009

Expressing concern over the continuing conflict in Afghanistan and noting the importance of stepping up the international community's efforts to help stabilize that country and promote the democratic process and economic growth there, we reaffirm our commitment to the goals of the common fight against the threats of terrorism, armed extremism, and illegal drug trafficking in Afghanistan. We shall continue and develop our cooperation in the interest of enhancing the capabilities of the Government of Afghanistan to accomplish key socioeconomic objectives, to raise living standards, and to ensure the security of its people.

We reaffirm our strong determination and capacity for expanding cooperation within the framework of the Russian-U.S. Counter-Terrorism Working Group and intend to make effective use of this mechanism to coordinate practical joint work in all aspects related to stabilization efforts in Afghanistan.

We are prepared to increase the assistance provided to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in strengthening and developing the capabilities of the Afghan National Army and police, and in training counternarcotics personnel. In this regard, we are intent on further implementation of the counternarcotics project under the auspices of the

Russia-NATO Council, using the International Interagency Center in Domodedovo, and on taking part in carrying out the Afghanistan-related projects of the OSCE pursuant to Decision No. 4/07 adopted in Madrid by the foreign ministers of that organization's participating states. In implementing UN Security Council Resolution No. 1386 and other resolutions that supplement it, we intend to make active use of the transit route through the territory of the Russian Federation for deliveries of property and equipment for the needs of the international forces operating in Afghanistan and strongly welcome and support the participation of other nations in stabilizing Afghanistan.

We consider it important to step up the fight against drug trafficking both within and outside of Afghanistan, including through the development of alternative livelihoods for farmers and interdiction of narcotics traffickers, and including prevention of shipments of precursors to that country pursuant to UNSC Resolution No. 1817.

To strengthen the capabilities of the Government of Afghanistan in the fight against drug trafficking, corruption, and other types of crime and threats, including those that are cross-boundary, we consider it important to encourage and support that country's efforts to implement the UN Convention against Corruption and the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

To further support our countries' shared counterterrorism, anticrime and counternarcotics objectives in Afghanistan, the United States and the Russian Federation have decided to develop a bilateral initiative to increase significantly the use of financial intelligence and law enforcement tools to stop the illicit financial flows related to heroin trafficking in Afghanistan, including that by the Taliban and organized crime. The initiative will include an operational component to target the trafficking and the illicit networks that support it.

We express our willingness to explore issues related to Russian-U.S. interaction and cooperation in restoring the transportation, energy, and industrial infrastructure of Afghanistan.

We believe it important to ensure the necessary security conditions for holding nationwide presidential and provincial elections in Afghanistan that would be credible and transparent to the people and that should become an important stage in the development of that country as a self-sufficient democratic state and demonstrate the viability of its political system. In this regard, we welcome the increased international support for the Afghan elections and call for additional assistance to Afghanistan after the elections.

We are in favor of strengthening regional approaches to issues related to the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan, with the UN playing a major coordinating role. In this regard, both countries will closely cooperate within the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly and "Paris Pact" process. We note the particular importance of the Special Conference on Afghanistan held on March 27, 2009, under the auspices of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Moscow, and the Hague International Conference on Afghanistan on March 31, 2009, as well as the meeting of the G–8 foreign ministers in Trieste in regard to Afghanistan.

We think it essential to intensify and strengthen interaction between Afghanistan and Pakistan in repelling the common threats of terrorism, extremism, and drug trafficking. We are prepared to help increase the effectiveness of such interaction, including through organizing Afghani-Pakistani summit meetings under our auspices, as happened in Ekaterinburg and Washington. We are committed to implementing the sanctions imposed by UNSC Resolution No. 1267 (Al Qaida/Taliban) and to bolstering the existing sanctions regime in order to isolate those who pose a threat to international peace and security.

We support the conditions set by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for reintegration efforts. These include recognition of the Constitution of Afghanistan, disarmament, and breaking any terrorist ties with Al-Qaida and other organizations connected with it.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Joint Statement Between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Missile Defense Issues
July 6, 2009

In accordance with the understanding reached at the meeting in London on April 1, 2009, Russia and the United States plan to continue the discussion concerning the establishment of cooperation in responding to the challenge of ballistic missile proliferation. Our countries are intensifying their search for optimum ways of strengthening strategic relations on the basis of mutual respect and interests.

We have instructed our experts to work together to analyze the ballistic missile challenges of the 21st century and to prepare appropriate recommendations, giving priority to the use of political and diplomatic methods. At the same time they plan to conduct a joint review of the entire spectrum of means at our disposal that allow us to cooperate on monitoring the development of missile programs around the world. Our experts are intensifying dialogue on establishing the Joint Data Exchange Center, which is to become the basis for a multilateral missile-launch notification regime.

The Russian Federation and the United States of America reaffirm their willingness to engage in equitable and mutually beneficial cooperation with all interested countries that share their assessments of the danger of global proliferation of ballistic missiles. We call upon all countries having a missile potential to refrain from steps that could lead to missile proliferation and undermine regional and global stability.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Joint Statement Between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Nuclear Cooperation
July 6, 2009

The United States of America and the Russian Federation confirm their commitment to strengthening their cooperation to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and stop acts of nuclear terrorism. We bear special responsibility for security of nuclear weapons. While we reconfirm that security at nuclear facilities in the United States and Russia meets current requirements, we stress that nuclear security requirements need continuous upgrading. We will continue cooperating on effective export controls that make it possible to prevent nuclear materials, equipment and technologies from falling into the hands of actors unauthorized by the state as well as prevent their use in any manner contrary to obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Building upon previous joint efforts, experience and achievements, and in order to fulfill our agreements reached in London on April 1, 2009, we declare an intent to broaden and deepen long-term cooperation to further increase the level of security of nuclear facilities around the world, including through minimization of the use of highly-enriched uranium in civilian applications and through consolidation and conversion of nuclear materials. We also reaffirm our commitment to dispose of existing stockpiles of weapon-grade materials that are surplus to defense needs consistent with our obligations under Article VI of the NPT.

Both sides remain committed to executing the Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Russian Federation Concerning the Management and Disposition of Plutonium Designated as No Longer Required for Defense Purposes and Related Cooperation to dispose of 34 metric tons each of weapons-grade plutonium in the United States and Russia. The parties recognize that successful implementation of their respective programs will be subject to future appropriation of funds.

Both sides commit themselves to the nuclear security initiatives begun in 2005, to include the repatriation of spent highly-enriched uranium (HEU) fuel. To expand on this work, we will jointly and together with other nations work to return research reactor HEU fuel under the agreed-upon schedule, as a practical implementation of nuclear nonproliferation objectives. We will continue working with other nations to secure and to eliminate excess stocks of proliferation-sensitive nuclear materials worldwide.

We will continue cooperating on development of new types of low-enriched uranium (LEU) fuel for possible conversion of research reactor cores in third countries and on conducting feasibility studies to explore possibilities for conversion of such individual reactors in the United States and Russia. We note the importance of HEU minimization in civilian applications and support such efforts to the maximum extent possible, where feasible.

To continue to improve the level of nuclear security and to combat existing and emerging threats, our experts will continue working to further improve physical protection systems at nuclear facilities and ensure that these improvements will be sustained in the long term. We will continuously improve physical protection, accounting and control of nuclear materials and radioactive substances and qualifications of professional staff.

Building on our excellent bilateral cooperation in nuclear security, and the expertise of both countries in this area, we will work together to strengthen the ability of other nations to carry out their weapons of mass destruction nonproliferation obligations under UNSCR 1540.

We express our mutual desire to expand capabilities to combat illicit trafficking of nuclear materials and radioactive substances at the borders of our countries.

Recognizing the important role of safeguards in promoting confidence in the peaceful use of nuclear energy and in addressing proliferation threats, we will work together to expand opportunities for bilateral and multilateral cooperation to strengthen the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the international safeguards system.

We share a common vision of the growth of clean, safe, secure and affordable nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Our nations have a great deal to offer together with other states to the international community in this area, focusing additional efforts on:

– Development of prospective and innovative nuclear energy systems;

– Research into methods and mechanisms for the provision of reliable nuclear fuel cycle services;

– Research into international approaches for the establishment of nuclear fuel cycle services to secure the nuclear weapons nonproliferation regime;

– Improvement of the international safeguards system;

As stated in London on April 1, 2009, the United States and Russia will work to bring into force the bilateral Agreement for Cooperation in the Field of Nuclear Energy, which will provide the basis for these and other types of cooperation.

We welcome the expansion and strengthening of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, which held the fifth meeting of partner nations in The Hague on June 16–17, 2009, and we are fully determined to continue joint work to expand national and collective efforts to combat the threat of nuclear terrorism. To this end, we will jointly initiate practical steps, to include conducting world-wide regional nuclear security best-practices workshops to facilitate greater international cooperation in implementing this initiative.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

The President's News Conference With President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia in Moscow
July 6, 2009

President Medvedev. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, ladies and gentlemen of the press, colleagues, we have just completed our negotiations with the U.S. President. The first visit of U.S. President Barack Obama in Russia was a very busy one. The first day showed that we managed to discuss all the items of our agenda, and it was a very big one.

I would like from the outset to say that there was a very useful and very open business-like conversation. This, no doubt, was a meeting that has been expected, both in this country and the United States of America, and on which not only the future of our two country depends but also, to a large extent, the trends of world development.

I would like to emphasize once again, of course, the first day of negotiations, our meeting in one on one and in a limited composition and a larger composition were very open and sincere. And this is extremely important. We have agreed that we will continue to communicate in this mode further on. In reality, for our relations, it is very important, and it is not a simple job, because the backlog of problems is quite impressive.

But we had enough of mutual wish and will and the positions of principles that we have always occupied and still occupy to make the discussion of these problems in a business-like manner. And we have reached mutually beneficial results.

I would like to emphasize that each of our countries understand its role in its own way, but at the same time, we realize our role and responsibility for the situation in this world, especially in a period when the level of globalization has reached such dimensions and such parameters that the decisions we make very often determine the situation in general. And such powerful states as the United States of America and the Russian Federation have special responsibility for everything that is happening on our planet.

We have many points of convergence, many mutual interests and global and economic ones and a variety of other interests. But our desire to discuss these subjects was mutual, and this is also one of very important results of our meeting, since the work we are doing requires good will, mutual respect, and honest understanding of each other's position.

We also came to the conclusion that Russian-American relations and the level achieved today does not correspond to their potential, to the other possibilities of our countries. And the important thing is that the level that we have today does not correspond to the need of the current age, and without active development of our relations on the foreign affairs agenda, on scientific, trade, educational, relations, we'll not be able to build the road to the 21st century.

We have spent several hours in very busy negotiations, very specific, and at the same we dwelt on the questions of philosophy of our cooperation. I'm grateful to the President of the United States for the understanding he showed on the principles that we put forward and our attention to the proposals made by the American side. So despite of the fact that in several hours we cannot remove the burden of all the problems, we have agreed that we will go forward without stopping, that we will make the decisions that are needed for the development of relations between our two countries.

We have discussed quite specific problems, and I would like to share some of them with you. We, of course, discussed international subjects. We spoke about such difficult problems as the process of Mideast—Middle East settlement. We agreed to continue our work, taking into account the visits we had in the Middle East recently and the plans that we discussed. We discussed the possibility of holding Moscow conference on the Middle East.

We spoke about a very important subject that is extremely—requires the coordination of our activities. This is the problem of Afghanistan. Without our joint work in that area,

we would not be able to achieve success in that area, and on that score we have agreed on a special statement.

Our relations will be also consolidated by our links in the humanitarian field, in the field of science. This has to be done by all means, and we'll be dealing with this after this meeting in a very persistent way.

Now, a few specific results of our negotiations. You are aware of them. We have agreed on a very important subject, the new agreement of strategic offensive arms. This is a basic element of our mutual security. The work was very intensive, and I must admit that our teams, our delegations, worked on this subject in a very fruitful way. They have showed reasonable compromise, and I would like to thank everyone who took part in these negotiations or is going to take part in them.

A result of this is that we have reached not only mutual understanding of what we—how we should move forward, but also to the basic levels on which we will advance our cooperation in those fields. We agreed on the levels of carriers and warheads, meaning that this is a very concrete subject.

In the mutual understanding that we have just signed with the President of the United States, it is said that our two countries can have from 500 to 1,100 carriers of strategic arms and from 1,500 to 1,600—1,675 warheads. These are the new parameters within which our dialogue will be going on and where we hope to achieve final agreement that will be part of the new treaty.

We have agreed also that the offensive and defensive systems of both countries should be considered together. We have adopted a joint statement on ABM. And this is also an important result of our work, even taking into account that we have divergences on a number of items. Nevertheless, we managed to sign—to approve a joint document.

We have discussed measures of cooperation in the nuclear field, and the most important is that we will continue our cooperation in every area. A lot depends on our countries. We have signed an agreement on military transit to Afghanistan. We decided to create a Presidential commission on cooperation, which will be coordinating relations among various agencies of the United States and the Russian Federation, respectively, on—in all priority areas, including economic and military areas. In the military area, these questions will be dealt by the chiefs of staffs that have just signed the document, General Makarov and Mullen.

Soon all these documents will be published and you will be able to familiarize yourself with them. On the whole, by characterizing our first day of work and the results of negotiations that we have had, I would like to say that I view them as the first but very important step in the process of improving full-scale cooperation between our two countries, which should go to the benefit of both states. And if both states benefit by it, that means everybody will benefit by it.

I would like to emphasize, in conclusion, that our country would like to reach such a level of cooperation with the United States which would be realistically worthy of the 21st century, which will ensure international peace and security. This is in our interests, and we are grateful to our American colleagues for the joint work we have done. It is true that the solution of many world problems depends on the joint will of the United States and Russia. Thank you.

President Obama. Good afternoon, everybody, and I want to thank President Medvedev and the Russian people for their hospitality. Michelle and I and our children are pleased to be here in Moscow and to be here so early in my administration.

We've just concluded a very productive meeting. As President Medvedev just indicated, the President and I agreed that the relationship between Russia and the United States has suffered from a sense of drift. We resolved to reset U.S.-Russian relations so that we can cooperate more effectively in areas of common interest. Today, after less than 6 months of collaboration, we've done exactly that by taking concrete steps forward on a range of issues, while paving the way for more progress in the future. And I think it's particularly notable that we've addressed the top priorities. These are not second-tier issues; they are fundamental to the security and the prosperity of both countries.

First, we've taken important steps forward to increase nuclear security and to stop the spread

of nuclear weapons. This starts with the reduction of our own nuclear arsenals. As the world's two leading nuclear powers, the United States and Russia must lead by example, and that's what we're doing here today. We have signed a joint understanding for a follow-on treaty to the START agreement that will reduce our nuclear warheads and delivery systems by up to a third from our current treaty limitations. This legally binding treaty will be completed this year.

We've also agreed on a joint statement on nuclear security cooperation that will help us achieve the goal of securing all vulnerable nuclear materials within 4 years, progress that we can build upon later this week at the G–8 summit. Together, these are important steps forward in implementing the agenda that I laid out in Prague.

As we keep our commitments, so we must ensure that other nations keep theirs. To that end, we had constructive discussions about North Korea and Iran. North Korea has abandoned its own commitments and violated international law. And that's why I'm pleased that Russia joined us in passing a U.N. Security Council resolution that calls for strong steps to block North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

Iran also poses a serious challenge through its failure to live up to international obligations. This is not just a problem for the United States. It raises the prospect of a nuclear arms race in the Middle East, which would endanger global security, while Iran's ballistic missile program could also pose a threat to the broader region. That's why I'm pleased that we've agreed on a joint statement on cooperation on missile defense and a joint threat assessment of the ballistic missile challenges of the 21st century, including those posed by Iran and North Korea.

Second, we have taken important steps forward to strengthen our security through greater cooperation. President Medvedev and I agreed upon the need to combat the threat of violent extremism, particularly from Al Qaida. And today we've signed an agreement that will allow the transit of lethal military equipment through Russia to Afghanistan. This is a substantial contribution by Russia to our international effort, and it will save the United States time and resources in giving our troops the support that they need.

Thanks to Admiral Mullen and his Russian counterpart, we've also agreed to resume military-to-military cooperation between the United States and Russia. This provides a framework for improved cooperation and interoperability between our armed forces, so that we can better address the threats that we face, from terrorism to privacy. We've also agreed to restore a joint commission on prisoners of war and missing in action, which will allow our Governments to cooperate in our unwavering commitment to our missing service men and women.

And third, we've taken important steps forward to broaden our cooperation on a full range of issues that affect the security and prosperity of our people. President Medvedev and I are creating a U.S.-Russian bilateral Presidential commission to serve as a new foundation for this cooperation. Too often, the United States and Russia only communicate on a narrow range of issues or let old habits within our bureaucracy stand in the way of progress. And that's why this commission will include working groups on development and the economy, energy and the environment, nuclear energy and security, arms control and international security, defense, foreign policy, and counterterrorism, preventing and handling emergencies, civil society, science and technology, space, health, education, and culture. And this work will be coordinated by Secretary Clinton and Minister Lavrov, and Secretary Clinton will travel to Russia this fall to carry this effort forward.

Just to give you one example of this cooperation is the new memorandum of understanding on health. We've learned, most recently with the H1N1 virus, that a disease that emerges anywhere can pose a risk to people everywhere. That's why our Department of Health and Human Services will cooperate with its Russian counterparts to combat infectious, chronic, and noncommunicable diseases, while promoting prevention and global health.

Finally, I'm pleased that Russia has taken the important step of lifting some restrictions on imports of U.S. livestock. The cost of these restrictions to American business is over $1.3 billion, and we've now made important progress towards restoring that commerce.

Now, I won't pretend that the United States and Russia agree on every issue. As President Medvedev indicated, we've had some frank discussions, and there are areas where we still disagree. For instance, we had a frank discussion on Russia—on Georgia, and I reiterated my firm belief that Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected. Yet even as we work through our disagreements on Georgia's borders, we do agree that no one has an interest in renewed military conflict. And going forward, we must speak candidly to resolve these differences peacefully and constructively.

President Medvedev and I are committed to leaving behind the suspicion and the rivalry of the past so that we can advance the interests that we hold in common. Today we've made meaningful progress in demonstrating through deeds and words what a more constructive U.S.-Russian relationship can look like in the 21st century. Tomorrow I look forward to broadening this effort to include business, civil society, and the dialogue among the American and Russian people.

I believe that all of us have an interest in forging a future in which the United States and Russia partner effectively on behalf of our security and prosperity. That's the purpose of resetting our relations; that is the progress we made today. And I once again want to thank President Medvedev and his entire team for being such wonderful hosts and working so effectively with our teams. Thank you.

Russian Presidential Press Attache Natalya A. Timakova. Colleagues, now we begin the joint press conference of the President of the Russian Federation and the U.S. President. You will be able to ask two questions. Don't forget to present yourselves. And the first question goes to the U.S. media.

Russia's Leadership/Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. Thank you, and good evening to both Presidents. President Obama, I'd like to ask you about the issue of trust, after this period of rocky relations between the countries, but also with the agreements that you've just laid out today. Having spent time with President Medvedev, do you feel like you have full trust in him, and have you settled in your mind who is really in charge here in Russia, the President or Prime Minister Putin?

And, President Medvedev, I'd like to ask you, polling shows that the American people have some hard feelings about—I'm sorry—that the Russian people have some hard feelings about America. I'm wondering what you think President Obama can do to try to change this?

President Obama. Well, first of all, this is now my second lengthy bilateral meeting with President Medvedev, and we've also had a series of telephone calls and other exchanges. And throughout our interactions, I've found him to be straightforward, professional. He is clear about the interests of the Russian people, but he's also interested in finding out what the interests of the United States are. And we have found, I think, an ability to work together extremely effectively.

So yes, I trust President Medvedev to not only listen and to negotiate constructively, but also to follow up—follow through on the agreements that are contained here today. And I again—I'm very appreciative not only of the manner in which he has dealt with me, but also the manner in which our teams have worked together. If you think about the short timeframe from our meeting in London to today and the fact that we have essentially accomplished all the goals that we had set in London—and these are not insubstantial achievements—I think it's a good sign for progress in the future.

Tomorrow I'll be having breakfast with Prime Minister Putin. I have not met him before. I'm looking forward to that meeting. My understanding is, is that President Medvedev is the President, Prime Minister Putin is the Prime Minister, and they allocate power in accordance with Russia's form of government in the same way that we allocate power in the United States.

And so my interest is in dealing directly with my counterpart, the President, but also to reach out to Prime Minister Putin and all other

influential sectors in Russian society so that I can get a full picture of the needs of the Russian people and the concerns of the Russian people. And my strong impression is, is that President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin are working very effectively together. And our interest is dealing with the Russian Government as a whole in order to achieve the improved bilateral relationship that I think can be accomplished.

President Medvedev. First of all, I would like to thank President Obama for the kind words he has just said about the spirit and the level of openness we enjoy in our personal relationship. Well, I said something about it already, previously. Personal relationship are very important, especially when you speak about the building of interstate relationship. And when the relationship between the Governments and the personal relationship are on the same level positive, that's always good for the relationship between countries.

Speaking of the attitude towards the American people, then they are friendly. I don't see any negative elements there. But when there are problems between the states, when there are negative signals being sent by the Government, then of course these signals reflect on the mood of the ordinary people. And thus, the better relationship between the countries are more—the more empathy people have towards each other in different countries.

We touched upon our different tasks between our meeting and the relationship between our countries knew ups and downs. We, during the World War II, saved the world, and there was strategic partnership between us. And now we also have a feeling that a lot depends on our relationship. And the success in delivering on all those expectations, on different fronts, well, a lot depends on our efforts, bearing in mind that our people have always had sympathy towards—empathy towards each other.

Press Attache Timakova. NTV company, please, you have the floor.

Nuclear Arms Reduction

Q. Thank you. I have a question to both Presidents. Russia and the U.S. are the largest nuclear powers in the world, accounting for 95 percent of warheads. You have been working on the documents on the NPT for quite some time, in fact, since 1970s. Do you think you will be able to have the situation in the NPT area under control when there are so many negative trends around the globe?

President Medvedev. Well, the nonproliferation problem is very important for our countries because we have and share the largest burden in the area of nonproliferation of strategic arms. We do have the major nuclear arsenals, and we have full responsibility for those arsenals. And I agree with you totally, there are negative trends in the world, and they are due to the emergence of new nuclear players. Some of them are not officially members of the nuclear club, but they have aspirations to have nuclear weapons and declare so openly or, which is worse, doing it clandestinely. And of course, it has a very negative bearing on the world.

And due to reasons very well known, there are regions around the world where the presence of nuclear arms would create huge problems, and these are areas where we should concentrate our efforts together with our American partners.

Those regions, those areas, are well known. There is no sense in naming them. But it's quite obvious that on the situation in the Middle East, on the Korean Peninsula, will depend the climate throughout the globe. It's our common, joint responsibility, and we should make our utmost to prevent any negative trends there. And we are ready to do that. Our negotiations with President Obama have demonstrated that we share the same attitude towards this problem.

President Obama. Well, I think President Medvedev said it well. This is an urgent issue and one in which the United States and Russia have to take leadership. It is very difficult for us to exert that leadership unless we are showing ourselves willing to deal with our own nuclear stockpiles in a more rational way. And that's why this post-START agreement is so important, and I'm hopeful that we can reduce our nuclear arsenals by as much as a third and,

hopefully, can move even beyond that in subsequent agreements and treaties.

The critical issue that President Medvedev identified is the fact that we are seeing a pace of potential proliferation that we have not seen in quite some time, and he mentioned two specific areas. In the Middle East, there is deep concern about Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons capability not simply because of one country wanting nuclear weapons, but the fact that if Iran obtained nuclear weapons, it is an almost—it is almost certain that other countries in the region would then decide to pursue their own programs. And we would then see a nuclear arms race in perhaps the most volatile part of the world.

In the Korean Peninsula, we've already seen North Korea flout its own commitments and international obligations in pursuit of nuclear weapons. And in all of these cases, as you see more proliferation of nuclear weapons, the possibilities not only of state actors targeting populations with nuclear weapons, but the possibility that those nuclear weapons could fall into the hands of nonstate actors, extremist organizations, poses an extraordinary threat to both Russia and the United States.

So I'm pleased on the progress that we've made so far. I think the fact that we got a joint threat assessment in terms of what ballistic missile capabilities and nuclear weapons could pose to our countries, that we will be conducting a review of that and making assessments to find ways that the United States and Russia can cooperate more effectively, that's going to be very important.

I think continuing the pursuit of cooperation that already exists between Russia and the United States on loose nuclear materials and making sure those are secure, I think that's going to be very important. Structuring a new, reinvigorated nonproliferation treaty that applies a set of rules to all countries, allows them to pursue peaceful nuclear energy without having the capacity to weaponize that nuclear capacity, that is going to be very important.

And so we've actually suggested a global nuclear security summit that we intend to host next year, and I discussed with President Medvedev the strong possibility that in a subsequent summit it could be hosted by Russia, where we bring all the countries together around the world to start making progress on this critical issue.

White House Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs. Matt Spetalnick from Reuters.

Situation in Western China/Missile Defense Systems

Q. Thank you. Deep divisions over a proposed U.S. missile shield have caused—contributed greatly to the deterioration of U.S.-Russian relations in recent years, and it does not seem that you gentlemen have finally resolved that issue either. President Obama, you have said very clearly that you would not accept the linkage between the missile systems and arms control talks. President Medvedev, you and Prime Minister Putin have said that these issues must be linked. Is there—are either of you gentlemen willing to budge or compromise on this issue? And if not, could this also contribute to a blockage or obstacle to reaching a final START II agreement?

And also, President Obama, I wonder if you could give us your reaction to the Chinese Government crackdown in the northwest of the country on rioting and unrest that has killed more than 140 people.

President Obama. With respect to the China situation, unfortunately, I've been traveling all night and in meetings all day, so I have not been fully briefed, and I don't want to comment until I actually see all the information. But I assure you that our team will get a statement to you as soon as I've been able to do that.

On missile defense, we have agreed that we are going to continue to discuss this critical issue. That is part of the joint statements that we've signed. I also believe that it is entirely legitimate for our discussions to talk not only about offensive weapon systems but also defensive weapon systems.

Part of what got us through the cold war was a sufficient sense of parity and deterrent capability, that both sides during those very difficult times understood that a first strike, the attempt to use nuclear weapons in a military conflict versus—against the other, could result in a extremely heavy price. And so any discussion of

nuclear strategy, security, has to include defensive as well as offensive capabilities.

The difference that we've had has been on the specifics of a missile defense system that the United States views as a priority not to deal with Russia, but to deal with a missile coming in from Iran or North Korea or some other state, and that it's important for the United States and its allies to have the capacity to prevent such a strike. There is no scenario from our perspective in which this missile defense system would provide any protection against a mighty Russian arsenal.

And so, in that sense, we have not thought that it is appropriate to link discussions of a missile defense system designed to deal with an entirely different threat unrelated to the kinds of robust capabilities that Russia possesses.

Now, having said that, President Medvedev has been very clear that this is a point of deep concern and sensitivity to the Russian Government. I suspect when I speak with President—Prime Minister Putin tomorrow, he will say the same thing. And what we would like to do is to work with Russia to advance a system that ensures that a stray missile, whether it was 1 or 10 or a handful of missiles coming from a third source, that we have the capabilities to prevent those from doing damage. I think we can arrive at those kinds of understandings, but it's going to take some hard work because it requires breaking down longstanding suspicions.

With respect to this particular configuration that was proposed several years ago, as you know, we're undergoing a thorough review of whether it works or not, what has been proposed. That review should be completed by the end of the summer, and I indicated to President Medvedev that as soon as that review is complete, we will provide the Russian Government our assessment of how we think we should proceed, and that will be the subject of extensive negotiations.

So ultimately, I think the more progress we make on some of the issues that I discussed earlier—nonproliferation, being able to track ballistic missiles coming from other sources—to the extent that we are building deeper cooperation on those fronts, I think the more effectively we're going to be able to resolve this issue. I believe that over time we will end up seeing that the U.S., Russian positions on these issues can be reconciled, and that, in fact, we have a mutual interest in protecting both of our populations from the kinds of dangers that weapons proliferations is posing today.

President Medvedev. I'll say a couple of words on this subject. Of course, antiballistic missile defense, not ballistic missile defense, but the problem of the third region area, is a difficult subject for our discussion.

But I would like to draw your attention to what President Obama said, and I would like to point it out myself. In our mutual understanding that has just been signed, we talk about the linkage between offensive and defensive weapons, and this already constitutes a step forward. Some time ago, on this question, we had all—only differences. Now this linkage is being stated, and this opens up the opportunity of bringing positions closer to each other.

Secondly, nobody is saying that ballistic missile defense is harmful or is posing a danger. It is aimed at resolving a number of practical tasks. The question is of linking this configuration of missile defense with interests of other countries. I would like to point out specially that our American partners, unlike what was happening in recent years, have taken a pause and now are studying this situation. As a result of this, they will formulate their final position.

As at least, this is also a step forward in reaching possible compromise on this fairly difficult subject. Before we just heard that all decisions have been made, they do not concern you, but they have—they present no threat to you. Our position is somewhat different. You're well familiar with it. I'm not going to say it again. We—our understanding is that these decisions do concern us, and we will have to come to terms on these positions. We realize fully well that the number of threats, including the link to the medium-range and ballistic missiles, is not diminishing but is growing in number. So we all have to think about what configuration on the whole the global antiballistic missile defense could have.

And this, during our limited composition meeting, I had mentioned to my colleague.

Press Attache Timakova. Distinguished colleagues, last question. Channel Number One.

Afghanistan

Q. Good evening. The question is to both Presidents. You spoke about your concerns about Afghanistan. Can you be more specific? What do Presidents think about the situation in that country? There is a feeling that the counterterrorist operation in Afghanistan is having difficulties. And to what extent cooperation between U.S. and Russia in transit can help or improve the situation, in greater detail, please?

President Medvedev. The subject of U.S.-Russian cooperation in Afghanistan is extremely important. It is for this reason we paid so much attention to the discussion of this problem, and we have just signed an agreement that concerns transit. It's an important subject, and we will of course continue cooperation with our American counterparts.

As concerns the current situation, it is—really is not simple. I am not trying to say that it is being—worsens, but in many aspects the progress is not available or is insignificant. But we value the efforts that are being made by the United States together with the other countries in order to prevent the terrorist threat that was emanating and still coming from the Afghan soil.

We are prepared in this sense to a full-scale cooperation with our U.S. and other partners, including in transit areas. We are prepared to help in the various aspects. I don't know to what extent, how quickly the situation will improve. It depends to a large extent to the development of the political system in Afghanistan, to what extent the Afghan Government will achieve successes in the economy. And it's not a simple task.

Nevertheless, we are prepared to continue with our efforts, the consultations with the Afghan side. In Yekaterinburg I met the President of that country, and I met the President of Pakistan, because both of these problems have to be resolved together. And if we can join our efforts both in the economic peaceful field and in terms of support of counterterrorist operation, the success will come sooner or later. In the final analysis, the success, let me emphasize once again, will depend on the maturity of the Afghan state and the readiness of the Afghan society to change.

President Obama. Well, as you may be aware, as soon as I came into office, we undertook a thorough review of our Afghan strategy to that point, in consultation with not only our NATO allies but all the forces internationally that have contributed to the efforts there. And we concluded that we had not made as much progress as we should have, given the duration in which we've been in Afghanistan, and that we can improve it.

So our approach has been to say that we need to have a strong security system in place for the Afghan elections to be completed. We have to train Afghan nationals for the army and police so that they can effectively secure their own country. We have to combine that with more effective diplomatic efforts. And we have to focus on development so that, for example, the people of Afghanistan don't have to grow poppy, but have other crops and goods that they can make a living with.

Now, we have just begun the implementation of this new strategy, and so I think it's too early to gauge its success so far. I think by the time that we've completed the next election and the—either President Karzai or another candidate has taken his seat, then we will be able to I think do an additional review and see what other efforts we can take in order to improve the situation. I will tell you that Russia's participation and contributions to this effort could be extraordinarily important.

Obviously, Russia has its own concerns about extremism and terrorism. Russia also has deep concerns about the drug trade and its infiltration into Russia. And Russia has extraordinary capabilities when it comes to training police forces, training armies. And so our hope is, is that, as part of the broader Presidential commission structure that we've put in place, that we're going to further discuss both the military efforts in Afghanistan, but also the development efforts and the diplomatic efforts so that we can make progress.

And President Medvedev is right that this is important for Afghanistan, but it's also important with respect to Pakistan. And we're going to have to think regionally in terms of how we approach these problems. Obviously, there are countries along the border of Afghanistan and Central Asia that are of deep strategic importance, and it's very important that we also include them in these conversations about how we can move forward.

But I just want to thank again the Russian Government for the agreement for military transit. That will save U.S. troops both time and money. And it's I think a gesture that indicates the degree to which, in the future, Russian-U.S. cooperation can be extraordinarily important in solving a whole host of these very important international issues.

All right, thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 7:21 p.m. at the Kremlin. In his remarks, the President referred to Adm. Michael G. Mullen, USN, chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; Gen. Nikolai Y. Makarov, Chief, Armed Forces General Staff, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey V. Lavrov of Russia; Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; and President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan. President Medvedev referred to President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan. President Medvedev and some reporters spoke in Russian, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Interview With AllAfrica.com
July 2, 2009

The President's Visit to Ghana

Q. We asked visitors to our site, AllAfrica.com, what they might be interested in with respect to your policy. And as you might imagine, the responses are everywhere: conflict resolution, development issues, trade issues, et cetera. But they and we have one immediate question.

The President. Right.

Q. How is it that you happened to pick Ghana as the first place to visit in sub-Saharan Africa?

The President. Well, part of the reason is because that Ghana has now undergone a couple of successful elections in which power was transferred peacefully, even a very close election. I think that the new President, President Mills, has shown himself committed to the rule of law, to the kinds of democratic commitments that ensure stability in a country. And I think that there is a direct correlation between governance and prosperity. Countries that are governed well, that are stable, where the leadership recognizes that they are accountable to the people and that institutions are stronger than any one person, have a track record of producing results for the people. And we want to highlight that.

U.S. Foreign Policy in Africa

Q. And I assume that you'd like to see a lot more Ghanas in Africa. And part of your policy would be, I assume, to encourage that.

The President. Absolutely.

Q. But how? Do you get——

The President. Well, part of it is lifting up successful models. And so by traveling to Ghana, we hope to highlight the effective governance that they have in place.

I don't think that we can expect that every country is going to undergo these transitions in the same way at the same time. But we have seen progress in democracy and transparency and rule of law, in the protection of property rights, in anticorruption efforts. We have seen progress over the last several years. In some cases, though, we're also seeing some backsliding. In my father's own country of Kenya, I'm concerned about how the political parties do not seem to be moving into a permanent reconciliation that would allow the country to move forward. And Kenya is not alone in some of the problems that we've seen of late, postelection or preelection.

And we just want to make sure that people are mindful that this isn't just some abstract notion that we're trying to impose on Africa.

There is a very practical, pragmatic consequence to political instability and corruption when it comes to whether people can feed their families, educate their children, and we think that Africa—the African Continent is a place of extraordinary promise as well as challenges. We're not going to be able to fulfill those promises unless we see better governance.

U.S. Role in Africa

Q. Do you have, with respect to that, priorities in terms of countries or regions? For instance, West Africa is extremely important in terms of oil, or East Africa in terms of some of the strategic concerns of the United States?

The President. I think the entire continent is important. And keep in mind that although I'm visiting Ghana on this particular trip, we've already had Tsvangirai of Zimbabwe in the Oval Office. We've had Kikwete from Tanzania in my office. And in each case, I'm trying to send the same message. You've seen some very good work by the administration in Tanzania, focusing on how to deliver concrete services to the people, and wherever folks want to help themselves, we want to be there as a partner. And I think that you've got some very strong leadership in Africa that is ready to move forward, and we want to be there with them.

On the economic front, that means opening up better trade opportunities. It means that we are interested not just in foreign aid, but in how we strengthen the capacity for development internally in these countries, and we want to work in a multilateral context, as well as the bilateral strengthening of relations with many of these countries.

But as you point out, there are both strategic, national security, economic, environmental reasons why we think this region is important. And part of the reason we wanted to—although we're only going to one country this time, I actually thought that it made sense for us to connect a trip to Ghana to a previous trip with the G–8, and we'll be meeting a number of African countries in Italy during the G–8 meeting—before that, a meeting in Russia—to show that Africa is directly connected to our entire foreign policy approach, that it's not some isolated thing where once every term you go visit Africa for a while to check that box, but rather it's an ongoing part of a broader discussion about how we move many of these international challenges forward.

Use of Technology in African Aid

Q. Development assistance will presumably be an important piece of your Africa policy. Now, development assistance is pretty fragmented, whether you look at the United States or you look at it globally, in the sense of varying countries have varying approaches. And now you, more than any President, are associated with using technological tools, and I can't help but wonder if you have in mind or have thought about using technology to bring some coherence, if you will, like tracking how aid works or goes and where it goes, et cetera.

The President. Look, I think you make a very important point, and that is that even just within the U.S. Government, our aid policies have been splintered among a variety of agencies, different theories embraced by different people depending on which administration, which party is in power at any given time. Trying to create something steady and focused on and always basing our policies on what works and not on some ideological previous position is going to be very important.

And technology can play a very important role in streamlining our aid to countries, making sure that we're tracking how that aid is being applied, making sure that it's reaching the people it's intended to reach. One of the concerns that I have with our aid policy generally is that Western consultants and administrative costs end up gobbling huge percentages of our aid overall. And it seems to me that what we should be doing is trying to minimize our footprint and maximize the degree to which we're training people to do for themselves. So I think using the Internet, using software, using modern technology to improve delivery systems is important.

Now, I also think on the ground in many of these countries, how we think about not high-tech stuff but low-tech technologies to, for example, improve food production is vitally important. And I'm still frustrated over the fact that the green revolution that we introduced

into India in the sixties, we haven't yet introduced into Africa in 2009. In some countries, you've got declining agricultural productivity. That makes absolutely no sense. And we don't need fancy computers to solve those problems. We need tried and true agricultural methods and technologies that are cheap and are efficient, but could have a huge impact in terms of people's day-to-day well being.

African Development

Q. In addition, you mentioned just a few minutes ago also the importance of investment and not just aid. What's the balance between assistance and investment? You get—most businesses get a bigger return on their investment in Africa than any other part of the world. So should that receive more emphasis than it's been getting? What kind of balance in your mind exists between development assistance and——

The President. Well, a couple of points I would make. Number one, you're not going to get investment without good governance. So that's part of the reason why we emphasize it. Again, this is a very practical, hard-headed approach to how we're going to see improvements in the daily lives of the peoples of Africa. If government officials are asking for 10, 15, 25 percent off the top, businesses don't want to invest there. That's point number one.

Point number two: I think that when my father left Kenya and traveled to the United States back in the early sixties, the GDP of Kenya and South Korea weren't equivalent; Kenya's was actually higher. What's happened over that 50-year period? What you've seen is Korea combine foreign investment, integration with the global economy, with a strategic sense of certain industries that they can promote for export; great emphasis on education for a skilled workforce; insisting that foreign investment is accompanied by technology transfer so that homegrown industries can be built and nurtured.

So we've got models out there. We know what it might take. What we haven't seen is, is a consistent, steady application of some of these models over time in Africa, and I think that now is the time to start.

U.S. Foreign Policy in Africa

Q. Is that a failure of U.S. policy, or is that a failure of governance in Africa?

The President. I would say that the international community has not always been as strategic as it should have been, but ultimately, I'm a big believer that Africans are responsible for Africa.

I think part of what's hampered advancement in Africa is that for many years, we made excuses about corruption or poor governance, that this was somehow the consequence of neocolonialism, or the West has been oppressive, or racism—I'm not a big—I'm not a believer in excuses.

I'd say I'm probably as knowledgeable about African history as anybody who's occupied my office. And I can give you chapter and verse on the—why the colonial maps that were drawn helped to spur on conflict, and the terms of trade that were uneven emerging out of colonialism.

And yet the fact is we're in 2009, and the West and the United States has not been responsible for what's happened to Zimbabwe's economy over the last 15 or 20 years. It hasn't been responsible for some of the disastrous policies that we've seen elsewhere in Africa. And I think that it's very important for African leadership to take responsibility and be held accountable.

And I think the people of Africa understand that. The problem is, is that they just haven't always had the opportunities to organize and voice their opinions in ways that create better results.

The President's Legacy/U.S. Role in Africa

Q. In the last minute or so of our conversation, even though you are really barely into your Presidency, I already feel compelled to ask you a legacy question. [*Laughter*] And that is: What, when you finish your Presidency, do you expect your stamp on Africa policy to be? What do you think that will be?

The President. What I would like, at the end of my term in office, to be able to say that the United States was an effective partner with countries throughout Africa in building the

kinds of institutions, both political, civil, economic, that allow for improving standards of livings and greater security for the people of Africa, that we've moved them on a trajectory in which they are integrating with the global economy, and that a young person growing up in Johannesburg or Lagos or Nairobi or Djibouti can say to themselves, "I can stay here in Africa; I can stay in my country and succeed, and through my success, my country and my people will get stronger."

That would be a good legacy. I don't expect that we're going to get there in 4 years or 8 years, but I think we can get on that path. And the United States is a critical partner in that process.

All right?

Q. I need another hour or so. [*Laughter*] But I thank you for your time.

The President. Thank you so much.

NOTE: The interview began at 3:03 p.m. in the Blue Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai of Zimbabwe; and President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete of Tanzania. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 7. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin of Russia in Moscow
July 7, 2009

Prime Minister Putin. Mr. President, I'm very glad to meet you here, and I'm glad to have this opportunity to be an acquaintance of yours. The history of relations between Russia and the United States has very many different occasions and events of different, shall we say, color. There were periods when our relations flourished quite a bit, and there were also periods of, shall we say, grayish mood between our two countries and of stagnation. With you, we link all our hopes for the furtherance of relations between our two countries. We are very glad to see you here and welcome you here in Russia.

President Obama. Thank you. Well, I very much appreciate you taking time to meet with me. We had excellent discussions with the President yesterday. And I'm aware of not only the extraordinary work that you've done on behalf of the Russian people in your previous role as Prime Minister—as President but in your current role as Prime Minister.

We think there's an excellent opportunity to put U.S.-Russian relations on a much stronger footing. And we may not end up agreeing on everything, but I think that we can have a tone of mutual respect and consultation that will serve both the American people and the Russian people well.

So thank you very much. I look forward to a very useful exchange of ideas. I also want to thank the Prime Minister for arranging very nice weather in Moscow.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:10 a.m. at the Novo Ogaryovo estate. In his remarks, he referred to President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia. Prime Minister Putin spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Graduation Ceremony at the New Economic School in Moscow, Russia
July 7, 2009

Thank you so much. Well, congratulations, Oksana. And to the entire class of 2009, congratulations to you. I don't know if anybody else will meet their future wife or husband in class

like I did, but I'm sure that you're all going to have wonderful careers.

I want to acknowledge a few people who are here. We have President Mikhail Gorbachev—is here today, and I want everybody to give him a big round of applause. I want to thank Sergei Guriev, the rector of the New Economic School; Maxim Boycko, their chairman of the board; and Arkady Dvorkovich, who is the NES board member, president of the alumni association, and is doing an excellent job for President Medvedev, because he was in our meeting yesterday.

Good morning. It is a great honor for me to join you at the New Economic School. Michelle and I are so pleased to be in Moscow. And as somebody who was born in Hawaii, I'm glad to be here in July instead of January. [*Laughter*]

I know that NES is a young school, but I speak to you today with deep respect for Russia's timeless heritage. Russian writers have helped us understand the complexities of the human experience and recognize eternal truths. Russia's painters, composers, and dancers have introduced us to new forms of beauty. Russia's scientists have cured disease, sought new frontiers of progress, and helped us go to space.

These are contributions that are not contained by Russia's borders, as vast as those borders are. Indeed, Russia's heritage has touched every corner of the world and speaks to the humanity that we share. That includes my own country, which has been blessed with Russian immigrants for decades. We've been enriched by Russian culture and enhanced by Russian cooperation. And as a resident of Washington, DC, I continue to benefit from the contributions of Russians, specifically from Alexander Ovechkin. [*Laughter*] We're very pleased to have him in Washington, DC.

Here at NES, you have inherited this great cultural legacy, but your focus on economics is no less fundamental to the future of humanity. As Pushkin said, "Inspiration is needed in geometry just as much as poetry." And today I want particularly to speak to those of you preparing to graduate. You're poised to be leaders in academia and industry, in finance and government. But before you move forward, it's worth reflecting on what has already taken place during your young lives.

Like President Medvedev and myself, you're not old enough to have witnessed the darkest hours of the cold war, when hydrogen bombs were tested in the atmosphere, and children drilled in fallout shelters, and we reached the brink of nuclear catastrophe. But you are the last generation born when the world was divided. At that time, the American and Soviet Armies were still massed in Europe, trained and ready to fight. The ideological trenches of the last century were roughly in place. Competition in everything from astrophysics to athletics was treated as a zero-sum game. If one person won, then the other person had to lose.

And then, within a few short years, the world as it was ceased to be. Now, make no mistake, this change did not come from any one nation. The cold war reached a conclusion because of the actions of many nations over many years and because the people of Russia and Eastern Europe stood up and decided that its end would be peaceful.

With the end of the cold war, there were extraordinary expectations for peace and for prosperity, for new arrangements among nations and new opportunities for individuals. And like all periods of great change, it was a time of ambitious plans and endless possibilities. But, of course, things don't always work out exactly as planned. Back in 1993, shortly after this school opened, one NES student summed up the difficulty of change when he told a reporter, and I quote him, "The real world is not so rational as on paper." The real world is not so rational as on paper.

Over two tumultuous decades, that truth has been borne out around the world. Great wealth has been created, but it has not eliminated vast pockets of crushing poverty. Poverty exists here, it exists in the United States, and it exists all around the world. More people have gone to the ballot box, but too many governments still fail to protect the rights of their people. Ideological struggles have diminished, but they've been replaced by conflicts over tribe and ethnicity and religion. A human

being with a computer can hold the same amount of information stored in the Russian State Library, but that technology can also be used to do great harm.

In a new Russia, the disappearance of old political and economic restrictions after the end of the Soviet Union brought both opportunity and hardship. A few prospered, but many more did not. There were tough times. But the Russian people showed strength and made sacrifices, and you achieved hard-earned progress through a growing economy and greater confidence. And despite faint, painful times, many in Eastern Europe and Russia are much better off today than 20 years ago.

We see that progress here at NES, a school founded with Western support that is now distinctly Russian, a place of learning and inquiry where the test of an idea is not whether it is Russian or American or European, but whether it works. Above all, we see that progress in all of you, young people with a young century to shape as you see fit.

Your lifetimes coincides with this era of transition. But think about the fundamental questions asked when this school was founded: What kind of future is Russia going to have? What kind of future are Russia and America going to have together? What world order will replace the cold war? Those questions still don't have clear answers, and so now they must be answered by you, by your generation in Russia, in America, and around the world. You get to decide. And while I cannot answer those questions for you, I can speak plainly about the future that America is seeking.

To begin with, let me be clear: America wants a strong, peaceful, and prosperous Russia. This belief is rooted in our respect for the Russian people and a shared history between our nations that goes beyond competition. Despite our past rivalry, our people were allies in the greatest struggle of the last century. Recently I noted this when I was in Normandy—for just as men from Boston and Birmingham risked all that they had to storm those beaches and scale those cliffs, Soviet soldiers from places like Kazan and Kiev endured unimaginable hardships to repeal—to repel an invasion and turn the tide in the East. As President John Kennedy said, "No nation in history of battle ever suffered more than the Soviet Union in the Second World War."

So as we honor this past, we also recognize the future benefit that will come from a strong and vibrant Russia. Think of the issues that will define your lives: security from nuclear weapons and extremism; access to markets and opportunity; health and the environment; an international system that protects sovereignty and human rights, while promoting stability and prosperity. These challenges demand global partnership, and that partnership will be stronger if Russia occupies its rightful place as a great power.

Yet unfortunately, there is sometimes a sense that old assumptions must prevail, old ways of thinking, a conception of power that is rooted in the past rather than in the future. There is the 20th century view that the United States and Russia are destined to be antagonists, and that a strong Russia or a strong America can only assert themselves in opposition to one another. And there is a 19th century view that we are destined to vie for spheres of influence, and that great powers must forge competing blocs to balance one another.

These assumptions are wrong. In 2009, a great power does not show strength by dominating or demonizing other countries. The days when empires could treat sovereign states as pieces on a chess board are over. As I said in Cairo, given our independence, any world order that—given our interdependence, any world order that tries to elevate one nation or one group of people over another will inevitably fail. The pursuit of power is no longer a zero-sum game; progress must be shared.

That's why I have called for a reset in relations between the United States and Russia. This must be more than a fresh start between the Kremlin and the White House, though that is important, and I've had excellent discussions with both your President and your Prime Minister. It must be sustained effort among the American and Russian people to identify mutual interests and expand dialogue and cooperation that can pave the way to progress.

This will not be easy. It's difficult to forge a lasting partnership between former adversaries;

it's hard to change habits that have been ingrained in our Governments and our bureaucracies for decades. But I believe that on the fundamental issues that will shape this century, Americans and Russians share common interests that form a basis for cooperation. It is not for me to define Russia's national interests, but I can tell you about America's national interests, and I believe that you will see we share common ground.

First, America has an interest in reversing the spread of nuclear weapons and preventing their use. In the last century, generations of Americans and Russians inherited the power to destroy nations, and the understanding that using that power would bring about our own destruction. In 2009, our inheritance is different. You and I don't have to ask whether American and Russian leaders will respect a balance of terror; we understand the horrific consequences of any war between our two countries. But we do have to ask this question: We have to ask whether extremists who have killed innocent civilians in New York and in Moscow will show that same restraint. We have to ask whether 10 or 20 or 50 nuclear-armed nations will protect their arsenals and refrain from using them.

This is the core of the nuclear challenge in the 21st century, the notion that prestige comes from holding these weapons, or that we can protect ourselves by picking and choosing which nation can have these weapons, is an illusion. In the short period since the end of the cold war, we've already seen India, Pakistan, and North Korea conduct nuclear tests. Without a fundamental change, do any of us truly believe that the next two decades will not bring about the further spread of these nuclear weapons?

That's why America is committed to stopping nuclear proliferation and, ultimately, seeking a world without nuclear weapons. That is consistent with our commitment under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. That is our responsibility as the world's two leading nuclear powers. And while I know this goal won't be met soon, pursuing it provides the legal and moral foundation to prevent the proliferation and eventual use of nuclear weapons.

We're already taking important steps to build this foundation. Yesterday President Medvedev and I made progress on negotiating a new treaty that will substantially reduce our warheads and delivery systems. We renewed our commitment to clean, safe, and peaceful nuclear energy, which must be a right for all nations that live up to their responsibilities under the NPT. And we agreed to increase cooperation on nuclear security, which is essential to achieving the goal of securing all vulnerable nuclear material within 4 years.

Now, as we keep our own commitments, we must hold other nations accountable for theirs. Whether America or Russia, neither of us would benefit from a nuclear arms race in East Asia or the Middle East. That's why we should be united in opposing North Korea's efforts to become a nuclear power and opposing Iran's efforts to acquire a nuclear weapon. I'm pleased that President Medvedev and I agreed upon a joint threat assessment of the ballistic challenges—ballistic missile challenges of the 21st century, including from Iran and North Korea.

This is not about singling out individual nations; it's about the responsibility of all nations. If we fail to stand together, then the NPT and the Security Council will lose credibility, and international law will give way to the law of the jungle. And that benefits no one. As I said in Prague, rules must be binding, violations must be punished, and words must mean something.

The successful enforcement of these rules will remove causes of disagreement. I know Russia opposes the planned configuration for missile defense in Europe. And my administration is reviewing these plans to enhance the security of America, Europe, and the world. And I've made it clear that this system is directed at preventing a potential attack from Iran. It has nothing to do with Russia. In fact, I want to work together with Russia on a missile defense architecture that makes us all safer. But if the threat from Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programs is eliminated, the driving force for missile defense in Europe will be eliminated, and that is in our mutual interests.

Now, in addition to securing the world's most dangerous weapons, a second area where America has a critical national interest is in isolating and defeating violent extremists. For years, Al Qaida and its affiliates have defiled a great religion of peace and justice and ruthlessly murdered men, women, and children of all nationalities and faiths. Indeed, above all, they have murdered Muslims. And these extremists have killed in Amman and Bali, Islamabad and Kabul, and they have the blood of Americans and Russians on their hands. They're plotting to kill more of our people, and they benefit from safe havens that allow them to train and operate, particularly along the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

And that's why America has a clear goal: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida and its allies in Afghanistan and Pakistan. We seek no bases, nor do we want to control these nations. Instead, we want to work with international partners, including Russia, to help Afghans and Pakistanis advance their own security and prosperity. And that's why I'm pleased that Russia has agreed to allow the United States to supply our coalition forces through your territory. Neither America nor Russia has an interest in an Afghanistan or Pakistan governed by the Taliban. It's time to work together on behalf of a different future, a future in which we leave behind the great game of the past and the conflict of the present, a future in which all of us contribute to the security of Central Asia.

And beyond Afghanistan, America is committed to promoting the opportunity that will isolate extremists. We are helping the Iraqi people build a better future, and leaving Iraq to the Iraqis. We're pursuing the goal of two states, Israel and Palestine, leave—living in peace and security. We're partnering with Muslim communities around the world to advance education, health, and economic development. In each of these endeavors, I believe that the Russian people share our goals, and will benefit from success—and we need to partner together.

Now, in addition to these security concerns, the third area that I will discuss is America's interest in global prosperity. And since we have so many economists and future business men and women in the room, I know this is of great interest to you.

We meet in the midst of the worst global recession in a generation. I believe that the free market is the greatest force for creating and distributing wealth that the world has ever known. But wherever the market is allowed to run rampant—through excessive risk-taking, a lack of regulation, or corruption—then all are endangered, whether we live on the Mississippi or on the Volga.

In America, we're now taking unprecedented steps to jump-start our economy and reform our system of regulation. But just as no nation can wall itself off from the consequences of a global crisis, no one can serve as the sole engine of global growth. You see, during your lives, something fundamental has changed. And while this crisis has shown us the risks that come with change, that risk is overwhelmed by opportunity.

Think of what's possible today that was unthinkable two decades ago. A young woman with an Internet connection in Bangalore, India, can compete with anybody anywhere in the world. An entrepreneur with a startup company in Beijing can take his business global. An NES professor in Moscow can collaborate with colleagues at Harvard or Stanford. That's good for all of us, because when prosperity is created in India, that's a new market for our goods; when new ideas take hold in China, that pushes our businesses to innovate; when new connections are forged among people, all of us are enriched.

There is extraordinary potential for increased cooperation between Americans and Russians. We can pursue trade that is free and fair and integrated with the wider world. We can boost investment that creates jobs in both our countries. We can forge partnerships on energy that tap not only traditional resources, like oil and gas, but new sources of energy that will drive growth and combat climate change. All of that, Americans and Russians can do together.

Now, government can promote this cooperation, but ultimately, individuals must advance this cooperation, because the greatest resource of any nation in the 21st century is you. It's people—it's young people especially. And the country which taps that resource will be the

country that will succeed. That success depends upon economies that function within the rule of law. As President Medvedev has rightly said, a mature and effective legal system is a condition for sustained economic development. People everywhere should have the right to do business or get an education without paying a bribe, whether they are in America or Russia or Africa or Latin America. That's not a American idea or a Russian idea; that's how people and countries will succeed in the 21st century.

And this brings me to the fourth issue that I will discuss, America's interest in democratic governments that protect the rights of their people. By no means is America perfect. But it is our commitment to certain universal values which allows us to correct our imperfections, to improve constantly, and to grow stronger over time. Freedom of speech and assembly has allowed women and minorities and workers to protest for full and equal rights at a time when they were denied. The rule of law and equal administration of justice has busted monopolies, shut down political machines that were corrupt, ended abuses of power. Independent media have exposed corruption at all levels of business and government. Competitive elections allow us to change course and hold our leaders accountable. If our democracy did not advance those rights, then I, as a person of African ancestry, wouldn't be able to address you as an American citizen, much less as a President. Because at the time of our founding, I had no rights—people who looked like me. But it is because of that process that I can now stand before you as President of the United States.

So around the world, America supports these values because they are moral, but also because they work. The arc of history shows that governments which serve their own people survive and thrive; governments which serve only their own power do not. Governments that represent the will of their people are far less likely to descend into failed states, to terrorize their citizens, or to wage war on others. Governments that promote the rule of law, subject their actions to oversight, and allow for independent institutions are more dependable trading partners. And in our own history, democracies have been America's most enduring allies, including those we once waged war with in Europe and Asia, nations that today live with great security and prosperity.

Now let me be clear: America cannot and should not seek to impose any system of government on any other country, nor would we presume to choose which party or individual should run a country. And we haven't always done what we should have on that front. Even as we meet here today, America supports now the restoration of the democratically elected President of Honduras, even though he has strongly opposed American policies. We do so not because we agree with him, we do so because we respect the universal principle that people should choose their own leaders, whether they are leaders we agree with or not.

And that leads me to one final area that I will discuss, which is America's interest in an international system that advances cooperation, while respecting the sovereignty of all nations.

State sovereignty must be a cornerstone of international order. Just as all states should have the right to choose their leaders, states must have the right to borders that are secure, and to their own foreign policies. That is true for Russia, just as it is true for the United States. Any system that cedes those rights will lead to anarchy. That's why we must apply this principle to all nations, and that includes nations like Georgia and Ukraine. America will never impose a security arrangement on another country. For any country to become a member of an organization like NATO, for example, a majority of its people must choose to; they must undertake reforms; they must be able to contribute to the alliance's mission. And let me be clear: NATO should be seeking collaboration with Russia, not confrontation.

And more broadly, we need to foster cooperation and respect among all nations and peoples. As President of the United States, I will work tirelessly to protect America's security and to advance our interests. But no one nation can meet the challenges of the 21st century on its own, nor dictate its terms to the

world. That is something that America now understands, just as Russia understands. That's why America seeks an international system that lets nations pursue their interests peacefully, especially when those interests diverge; a system where the universal rights of human beings are respected, and violations of those rights are opposed; a system where we hold ourselves to the same standards that we apply to other nations, with clear rights and responsibilities for all.

There was a time when Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin could shape the world in one meeting. Those days are over. The world is more complex today. Billions of people have found their voice, and seek their own measure of prosperity and self-determination in every corner of the planet. Over the past two decades, we've witnessed markets grow, wealth spread, and technology used to build, not destroy. We've seen old hatreds pass, illusions of differences between people lift and fade away; we've seen the human destiny in the hands of more and more human beings who can shape their own destinies. Now we must see that the period of transition which you have lived through ushers in a new era in which nations live in peace and people realize their aspirations for dignity, security, and a better life for their children. That is America's interests, and I believe that it is Russia's interest as well.

I know that this future can seem distant. Change is hard. In the words of that NES student back in 1993, "The real world is not so rational as on paper." But think of the change that has unfolded with the passing of time. One hundred years ago, a czar ruled Russia, and Europe was a place of empire. When I was born, segregation was still the law of the land in parts of America, and my father's Kenya was still a colony. When you were born, a school like this would have been impossible, and the Internet was only known to a privileged few.

You get to decide what comes next. You get to choose where change will take us, because the future does not belong to those who gather armies on a field of battle or bury missiles in the ground; the future belongs to young people with an education and the imagination to create. That is the source of power in this century. And given all that has happened in your two decades on Earth, just imagine what you can create in the years to come.

Every country charts its own course. Russia has cut its way through time like a mighty river through a canyon, leaving an indelible mark on human history as it goes. As you move this story forward, look to the future that can be built if we refuse to be burdened by the old obstacles and old suspicions; look to the future that can be built if we partner on behalf of the aspirations we hold in common. Together, we can build a world where people are protected, prosperity is enlarged, and our power truly serves progress. And it is all in your hands.

Good luck to all of you. Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:13 p.m. at the Gostinny Dvor. In his remarks, he referred to Oksana Sytnova, class of 2009 top graduate, New Economic School; Alexander M. Ovechkin, left wing, National Hockey League's Washington Capitals; former President Mikhail S. Gorbachev, President Dmitry A. Medvedev, Aide to the President Arkady V. Dvorkovich, and Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin of Russia; Konstantin Fominykh, former student, New Economic School; and President Jose Manuel Zelaya Rosales of Honduras.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia in Moscow
July 7, 2009

[*President Medvedev's remarks were joined in progress.*]

President Medvedev. ——by the way, something I have already had the chance to watch on TV, particularly your speech at the New School of Economics.

President Obama. Thank you.

President Medvedev. Because this, indeed, was a systemic outline of the relations between the United States and Russia on a number of issues, both bilateral and international. And also, we'll have an opportunity today to talk to the businesspeople.

President Obama. Yes.

President Medvedev. This only means that your visit turned out to be very substantial, intensive, and multifaceted, covering all matters of our cooperation, including foreign policy, bilateral relations, economic matters, humanitarian, which is very good.

President Obama. Thanks for your help.

President Medvedev. So we are also getting prepared to go, the two of us, to Italy, and there we'll continue discussing of matters.

President Obama. Absolutely. And I've also enjoyed a lot of good food. [*Laughter*]

So the—no, we had a very good day today, building off the very productive meetings yesterday. I had a good conversation with the Prime Minister, and I think that his approach to these issues was very similar to yours, and I think that we have the potential of doing some very important business together.

And seeing the young people today receive their diplomas was very encouraging. I saw your young Finance Minister there and an economic adviser there. And I think that you've got a lot of very talented young people who, I think, are going to be doing great things for Russia.

So I continue to thank you for your extraordinary hospitality. I'm looking forward to having a chance to meet some additional officials during lunch, and then I think the business meeting this afternoon will be very productive because I think both Russia and the United States has an interest in expanding our commercial relationship. So I thank you for the suggestion of bringing these business leaders together.

All right. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:33 p.m. in the Kremlin. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin, Minister of Finance Aleksey L. Kudrin, and Aide to the President Arkady V. Dvorkovich of Russia. President Medvedev spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the Parallel Business Summit in Moscow
July 7, 2009

Good afternoon. *Dobryi den'.* It is a great privilege to join all of you today with President Medvedev. From our first meeting at the G–20 summit in London to our discussions here in Moscow, President Medvedev's leadership has been critical to new progress in U.S.-Russian relations. And the fact that he has experience in business, in the private sector, makes him an invaluable ally in our efforts to improve the commercial ties between our two countries.

I want to thank our Ambassador, John Beyrle, for all the work that he does here in Moscow. And I want to thank all the organizations that helped to bring us here today: the U.S.-Russia Business Council, the American

Chamber of Commerce in Moscow, the Russian Union of Industrial Entrepreneurs, Business Russia, and so many others.

All of you are part of a long line of commerce and trade between our peoples. Russia and the U.S. first established diplomatic relations more than 200 years ago. But before we ever exchanged ambassadors, we exchanged goods. Along the way, you gave us a pretty good deal on Alaska. Thank you. [*Laughter*] Even during a long cold war, trade endured: American grains, Russian raw materials. And in recent years, Russian-American trade surged.

So I want to thank all of you for your outstanding ideas on how our two countries can deepen these ties even further with new trade and investments that will create new jobs and prosperity for people in our countries. This was a key message of the speech that I just delivered this morning at the New Economic School, where you've got some of the most talented young people in Russia studying business and economics, recognizing that the future of Russia is intimately wrapped up with commerce.

Now, I've called for a reset in relations between Russia and the United States, but this can't just be a matter of two Presidents. It has to go deeper. It has to be between our people. It has to be more than just security or dismantling weapons. It has to be about our common prosperity, the jobs we create, the innovation we unleash, the industries that we build.

And that's why I made it very clear: America seeks a prosperous Russia that partners with us on a broad range of issues. We want Russia to be selling us goods, and we want Russia to be buying goods from us. And that's why we've created a U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission to explore new opportunities for partnership.

Now, many of you here are part of this important work, and I want to thank you. And I also want to thank our commission cochairs for their leadership, and I am confident that they are going to do an outstanding job, our Minister Nabiullina and Commerce Secretary Gary Locke. They both bring a long track record of forging trade relationships and creating jobs in the 21st century in agriculture, in health, in energy, science, and technology.

Our commission reflects a fundamental truth of the global economy, and that is that prosperity is shared. When Russia buys aircrafts from U.S. aerospace companies, that sustains jobs in America. When an America soda company opens a new bottling plant outside of Moscow, that creates jobs for Russians. When our economies grow more intertwined, all of us can make progress.

But if the opportunities of our global economy are shared, so are the risks. Reckless speculation of bankers in one country reverberates on the floor of the Moscow Stock Exchange. A contracting global economy and shrinking trade means closed factories and lost jobs from North America to northern Russia.

So our fortunes are linked, and yet so much potential remains untapped. I said that we had made progress, but consider this: Total trade between our countries is just $36 billion. Our trade, America's trade with Russia, is only about 1 percent of all our trade with the world—1 percent—a percent that's virtually unchanged since the cold war. And that 36 billion is about the same as our trade with Thailand, a country with less than half of the population of Russia. Surely, we can do better.

In fact, Russia and the United States are natural economic partners. Between us, we're a market of some 440 million consumers, including Russia's growing middle class. There's Russia's skilled workers, vast scientific establishment, and natural resources. On the other hand, there's American leadership in high-tech, manufacturing, agriculture, and capital. So we need to make it easier for American companies to invest in Russia and make it easier for Russian companies to invest in the United States.

There are so many opportunities for cooperation, some of which have already been mentioned. But in order to achieve this better future, we're going to have to do some work, and some of the areas where our Governments are going to have to do work have already been mentioned. We have to promote transparency, accountability, rule of law, on which investments and economic growth depend. And so I welcome very much President Medvedev's initiatives to promote the rule of law and ensure a

mature and effective legal system as a condition for sustained economic growth.

We also have to work on bureaucracy. The small example that was just mentioned, I'm sure, is costing millions, billions, cumulatively over time, of lost opportunities and spent person hours unnecessarily, because we simply haven't updated our laws. Russian and American collaboration could unleash opportunities and prosperity across a whole range of endeavors, from agriculture to aerospace, from green construction to clean energy, from transportation to telecommunications, if we seize this moment, if we work together.

Now, government can promote this cooperation. We can help to get out of the way, and we will. But ultimately, individual entrepreneurs and businesses have to advance the agenda. And I commend you for being here to do precisely that, because entrepreneurship and innovation are among the greatest forces in human history when it comes to progress and prosperity. It's our workers, it's our people, it's our ideas, who are the greatest engines of economic growth. It will be with their skills and talent that ultimately will determine the fate of nations in the 21st century, not simply the bountiful natural resources that both America and Russia share.

I'm told there's a Russian proverb that says, "Every seed knows its time." So today I hope that we've planted a seed, a seed of new cooperation and new commerce. And now we must do the work of seeing that that seed grows into a relationship that advances prosperity for our peoples.

So thank you very much for gathering in that spirit. Thank you for your commitment to progress. We need to grow this economy, and we're going to be able to do it faster and more effectively if we're doing it together. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:19 p.m. at the Manezh Exhibition Hall. In his remarks, he referred to President Dmitry A. Medvedev and Minister of Economic Development Elvira S. Nabiullina of Russia.

Remarks at the Parallel Civil Society Summit in Moscow
July 7, 2009

Thank you very much. Thank you. Well, good afternoon. *Dobryi den'*. I apologize that, I think, I'm running late, and I'm leaving early. This is a good reason why civil society is so important, because you can't always count on politicians. [*Laughter*] It is a great pleasure to be with all of you. Through the work that you do, you underscore what I believe is a fundamental truth in the 21st century: That strong, vibrant nations include strong, vibrant civil societies.

This was also a key message of the speech that I gave this morning at the New Economic School. We not only need a reset button between the American and Russian Government, but we need a fresh start between our societies, more dialogue, more listening, more cooperation in confronting common challenges. For history teaches us that real progress, whether it's economic or social or political, doesn't come from the top down. It typically comes from the bottom up. It comes from people; it comes from the grassroots; it comes from you. The best ideas and solutions come from ordinary citizens who become involved in their communities and in their countries. And by mobilizing and organizing and changing people's hearts and minds, you then change the political landscape. And oftentimes politicians get the credit for changing laws, but in fact, you've created the environment in which those new laws can occur.

I learned this myself when I worked as a community organizer in Chicago. I'm glad to see my friend here from Chicago, Calvin Holmes, who—we used to work together on a range of civic issues. I was working in communities that were devastated by steel plant closings, and so I went door to door, I worked with churches, trying to learn what people needed.

And we had a lot of setbacks. In fact, we had more failures than successes. But we kept on listening to the people; we learned from them; we got them involved. And over time, they

chose projects to work on, whether it was building a new play lot or improving a neighborhood park or improving the local school or improving housing in the community. And slowly, block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood, you started to see change happen: more jobs, better housing, more opportunities for young people. And I learned a lesson, that if you want to bring about change, it's not enough just to be an advocate; it's not enough to just wait for the Government to act. You have to step up and deliver results, real impact on people's lives.

And that is something that I think is lost sometimes when we discuss civil society. There's a tendency sometimes for this to be a very abstract conversation with very lofty goals. And since I am a former law professor, I love abstractions and lofty goals. But your neighbor, your friend, your coworker, they're struggling with very immediate things right now: Can they pay the rent? Can their child go to a school that is going to teach them so that they can succeed in the future?

Those are the day-to-day struggles that they're wrestling with. And if they can't see a connection between what you are doing and their lives getting better in the short term, as well as the long term, then it's very hard to get any traction over time.

Now, no community is the same, and every country will follow its own path. So let me be very clear: Russia's future is up to the Russian people. Not every choice that's good for the United States is going to be good for Russia. Not every model of organization or development or democracy may be easily transplantable from one country to the next. But let me also say that we can learn from each other, and I do think there's some universal principles. So I commend you for this summit, designed not to lecture, but to listen, as was already pointed out, not to teach or impose solutions, but to learn from each other, from the bottom up.

As today's speakers explained, there are so many opportunities for new partnerships: developing strong, prosperous communities; expanding education and exchanges that open young minds to each other's countries; promoting healthy lifestyles that help people live longer, more productive lives; discovering the clean energy technologies we need to protect our environment and confront climate change. These are the challenges that we can meet together.

And meeting these challenges, in turn, requires what many of you have dedicated your lives to sustaining a vibrant civil society: the freedom of people to live as they choose, to speak their minds, to organize peacefully, and to have a say in how they are governed; a free press to report the truth; confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice; a government that's accountable and transparent. And we honor all of you for the passion and perseverance that you bring to these causes.

As I've said elsewhere, I don't think these are American ideals, and I don't think they are the monopoly of one country. They're universal values; they're human rights. And that's why the United States of America will support them everywhere. That is our commitment, and that is our promise.

And in supporting these ideals, it's also important that we uphold them ourselves. And that's why I take the last speaker's admonition as a useful reminder that what we do matters, in part because although we know that sometimes we'll fall short of our ideals, when we do, they can be an excuse for others. Our journey to perfect our Union goes on to this day. And that's why I did order the closing of the Guantanamo Bay prison, and I did ban torture without equivocation and without exception.

Here in Russia, I welcome the steps that President Medvedev has taken so that civil society groups can play a more active role on behalf of the Russian people. And I want to acknowledge that we are joined today by representatives of two important organizations, the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman and the Presidential Commission on Human Rights and Civil Society.

Make no mistake: Civil society, civil groups, hold their governments to high standards. And I know, because this audience includes Americans who've been critical of me for not moving fast enough on issues that are of great importance. They've said it to my face in the Oval Office while I was President. [*Laughter*] They told me I was wrong. And in some cases they

changed my mind, in some cases they didn't. And that's okay, because we're not going to agree on everything. But I know this: Their voices and their views and their criticism ultimately will make my decisions better. They will make me ask tougher questions and ask my staffs tougher questions. And we'll find out: Are there ways of doing what we need to do that conform to our deepest held values and our ideals and that are sustainable over the long term? That makes our country stronger in the long term, and I wouldn't want it any other way.

So this summit reminds us: The fresh starts have to be between more than just two Presidents. They have to be between our two peoples, our two societies. They have to be more than just common security, the cold war weapons we dismantle. It must be about our common opportunity, the future of progress and prosperity that we build together.

And I think that the leadership here in Russia, both civil and governmental, understand this. I had lunch with President Medvedev this afternoon, and we started talking about health issues and the continuing high mortality rate among Russian men in particular. And we talked about alcoholism, and we talked about smoking. And we talked about the fact that government programs can be initiated, but to the extent that there's been success in the United States around reducing smoking levels, it's not only a matter of changing laws, it's also been changing attitudes, so that people feel that they need to change. And they internalize these different attitudes. That's something that civic society can do in a way that government never can. I then met the leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, and he talked about how, you know, government exchanges are useful, but religious organizations, they can help melt away the suspicions and mistrust that have built between people over time.

So just in those two conversations, in the span of 15 minutes, essentially what I heard was a call for action from you. Confidence that what you are doing matters, even when sometimes it seems hard and it seems as if nobody is listening. That's what our work here on Earth must be about, what Tolstoy called the "sole meaning of life . . . to serve humanity." Now, thank you for making that cause the meaning of your lives. And good luck to all of you.

Spasibo.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:38 p.m. at the Metropol Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Calvin L. Holmes, executive director, Chicago Community Loan Fund; Yuri Dzhibladze, president, Center for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights; President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia; and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

Statement on Health Care Reform
July 7, 2009

I am pleased by the progress we're making on health care reform and still believe, as I've said before, that one of the best ways to bring down costs, provide more choices, and assure quality is a public option that will force the insurance companies to compete and keep them honest. I look forward to a final product that achieves these very important goals.

Remarks During a Meeting With Opposition Leaders in Moscow
July 7, 2009

[*The President's remarks were joined in progress.*]

——not simply tolerate dissenting voices but also to respect and recognize dissenting voices. This is one of the elements, along with an independent media and adherence to the rule of law, that has helped to solidify our own Government during some very difficult times. I said in my remarks recently that the fact that

I sit before you as President of the United States is a testimony to the power of dissent in the United States over time in creating a different reality. And it's also an important tool for fighting corruption.

So I think it's very important that I come before you with some humility. I think in the past there's been a tendency for the United States to lecture rather than to listen. And we, obviously, still have much work to do with our own democracy in the United States, but nevertheless, I think we share some common values and interest in building a strong, democratic culture in Russia as well as the United States.

And I want to say that this is, by the way, something I do in every country I visit. So whether I visit—travel to Turkey or I travel to England, wherever I go, I think it's always important for me to recognize that the particular head of state that I'm meeting with is the head of the government, but that the society itself represents a larger spectrum of views.

So I again am grateful to all of you for taking the time. And rather than spend all the time talking, what I'd like to do is listen to you and find out your perspectives, your views, and we can go in any direction that you prefer. We can talk about policy and specific concerns or questions you may have for me. Or we can talk more generally about how democracy is progressing——

[*At this point, the remarks continued, and no transcript was provided.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:14 p.m. at the Ritz Carlton hotel. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Joint Understanding by President Barack H. Obama and President Dmitry A. Medvedev on the START Follow-on Treaty
July 6, 2009

The President of the United States of America and the President of the Russian Federation have decided on further reductions and limitations of their nations' strategic offensive arms and on concluding at an early date a new legally binding agreement to replace the current START Treaty, and directed that the new treaty contain, *inter alia*, the following elements:

1. A provision to the effect that each Party will reduce and limit its strategic offensive arms so that seven years after entry into force of the treaty and thereafter, the limits will be in the range of 500–1100 for strategic delivery vehicles, and in the range of 1500–1675 for their associated warheads. The specific numbers to be recorded in the treaty for these limits will be agreed through further negotiations.
2. Provisions for calculating these limits.
3. Provisions on definitions, data exchanges, notifications, eliminations, inspections and verification procedures, as well as confidence building and transparency measures, as adapted, simplified, and made less costly, as appropriate, in comparison to the START Treaty.
4. A provision to the effect that each Party will determine for itself the composition and structure of its strategic offensive arms.
5. A provision on the interrelationship of strategic offensive and strategic defensive arms.
6. A provision on the impact of intercontinental ballistic missiles and submarine-launched ballistic missiles in a non-nuclear configuration on strategic stability.
7. A provision on basing strategic offensive arms exclusively on the national territory of each Party.
8. Establishment of an implementation body to resolve questions related to treaty implementation.

9. A provision to the effect that the treaty will not apply to existing patterns of cooperation in the area of strategic offensive arms between a Party and a third state.

10. A duration of the treaty of ten years, unless it is superseded before that time by a subsequent treaty on the reduction of strategic offensive arms.

The Presidents direct their negotiators to finish their work on the treaty at an early date so that they may sign and submit it for ratification in their respective countries.

Signed at Moscow, this sixth day of July, 2009, in duplicate, in the English and Russian languages.

For the United States of America:

BARACK OBAMA

For the Russian Federation:

DMITRY MEDVEDEV

NOTE: This item was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 8. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint understanding.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Giorgio Napolitano in Rome, Italy

July 8, 2009

President Napolitano. Good morning. President Obama is—will leave shortly, so this will be a very short press conference.

And first of all let me express my deepest appreciation for this visit of President Obama, who came here today with his delegation and for meeting him there today.

We have followed very closely all through the recent months the position that the Obama administration has taken, and this has been subject to a wide consensus by the Italian Government, both by the Italian Government and the opposition.

I would also like to stress that the compliance with the position of the Italian Government is fully shared by the other countries. And over the years, it has also been translated into the participation by the Italian Government into various peacekeeping missions in crises area. And I would like to mention Afghanistan, and President Obama has expressed his appreciation in this connection.

We have also addressed a number of other issues. I would just like to stress that we have agreed on the need for Europe to play its role in a scenario which has radically changed, and where the center of gravity of economic and political relations has drifted away from Europe.

But we're—Europe still has an important role to play because of experience of integration, per its model of a market economy, and for the historic values which it inspires itself for, in the European constitution.

We can still set an example to the international community, provided that Europe is united and more efficient and speaks with one single voice. And I think that this is widely shared by President Obama.

We are on the eve of the G–8 summit, which will take up various formats, as we all know, these 3 days. And this trust that in the preparation of this important event, especially when it comes to the financial and economic crisis and the measures that have to be taken up to address this crisis, they—we have a wide convergence of ideas and propositions between President Obama, the U.S. administration, and the Italian Government.

Thank you and I wish you fruitful work in L'Aquila.

President Obama. Well, let me begin by thanking the Italian people and President Napolitano for their extraordinary hospitality. I will be leaving right after this press discussion

to L'Aquila, where we'll be joining other world leaders at the G–8 summit. I'll also have an opportunity to take a tour of the damage that was done in L'Aquila.

Obviously, our hearts were broken by the death and destruction that took place after the earthquake. And I'm very pleased that the United States, like many other countries, will be contributing to help the rebuilding process. In fact, we have, along with the National Italian American Foundation, already identified projects to help rebuild facilities at the University of L'Aquila and to provide scholarships and summer programs.

And so that's a nice, concrete affirmation of the extraordinary friendship between the Italian people and the United States. As I was mentioning to the President, that bond is not just between the military, but it's between our peoples. A lot of American citizens trace their roots back to this country, and the traditions of Italy have greatly enriched America.

And so it is a wonderful pleasure to be here. It is particularly a pleasure to be here because the Italian Government, I think, has been such a great friend to the United States on a whole range of issues, and President Napolitano mentioned some of those. We are working hand in hand in places like Afghanistan to ensure that we are isolating extremists and strengthening the forces of moderation around the world.

On the international front, we discussed the importance of Europe and the United States raising standards on financial institutions to ensure that a crisis like the one that's taken place will never happen again.

President Napolitano was keenly interested in the work that we were doing in Russia around nuclear nonproliferation. And he agreed that even as the United States and Russia find ways to fulfill our responsibilities to reduce our stockpiles, that it's very important for the world community to speak to countries like Iran and North Korea and encourage them to take a path that does not result in a nuclear arms race in places like the Middle East, and that there are other means by which countries can ensure their sovereignty and gain respect around the world.

So the topics that will be discussed at G–8, whether it's climate change, issues of world poverty, the global financial crisis, issues of nuclear nonproliferation, these are all issues in which the Italian Government has already shown extraordinary leadership, and we are grateful that we will, for many years to come, be able to call Italy a friend.

And just a personal note, I had heard of the wonderful reputation of President Napolitano as somebody who has the admiration of the Italian people because of not only his longstanding service but also his integrity and his graciousness. And I just want to confirm that everything about him that I had heard is true. He's an extraordinary gentleman, a great leader of this country, and the fact that he has been such a gracious host is something that we all greatly appreciate.

So thank you, Mr. President, for your leadership. Thanks to the people of Italy for your great friendship to the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:03 p.m. in Quirinale Palace. President Napolitano spoke in Italian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Telephone Remarks to the Influenza Preparedness Summit in Bethesda, Maryland
July 9, 2009

Well, the—first of all, just let me tell you that everybody is asking about Janet, including President Napolitano here. [*Laughter*] And I'm very appreciative that all of you are there, and my remarks are going to be very brief.

I think it's clear that although we were fortunate not to see a more serious situation in the spring when we first got news of this outbreak, that the potential for a significant outbreak in the fall is looming. And Kathleen, Janet, John

Brennan, Arne Duncan, and our entire team have tried to engage in the most rigorous planning exercise to make sure that anything that may occur in the fall, we're prepared for.

And so I won't go through the details of this. I'm sure that Kathleen and Janet and others have laid out what the potential consequences are of a renewed outbreak of H1N1. We want to make sure that we are not promoting panic, but we are promoting vigilance and preparation. And the most important thing for us to do in this process is to make sure that State and local officials prepare now to implement a vaccination program in the fall, but also that they are working on an overall public communications campaign with the White House and the possibilities that we may need to be dealing with schools that are seeing significant outbreaks of H1N1.

And we've looked at past cases of this being properly handled and situations like this being improperly handled, and one of the most important differences is where it's well handled, State and local officials have complete ownership over this issue. They are providing good ideas to the Federal Government; they are critical links to inform us what's working and what's not.

And so I'm just very grateful that all of you are taking this seriously. We may end up averting a crisis. That's our hope. But I think that if we are all working together in a thoughtful, systematic way based on the best science possible, that even if this turns out to be a serious situation, we can mitigate the damage and protect our neighbors and our friends and coworkers.

So again, my main message to you is to say thank you. You are working with a outstanding team in Kathleen, Janet, Arne, and John. And if there are any issues at all that you think we have not raised, any t's we have not crossed or i's that we have not dotted, that affect either our general approach or your specific community, please let us know. We don't want to find out after the fact that there's some things that we could have done better. We want to find out now and make sure that we're planning ahead.

So, Kathleen, good job as always, and I want you to know that in conversations with world leaders about this issue, what's clear is, is that we are way ahead in terms of our planning. And in fact, we may need to provide some guidance and direction to other public health officials in other countries who may not have done such excellent preparation as you have done.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:30 p.m., c.e.s.t., from L'Aquila, Italy, to summit participants at the National Institutes of Health. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano; President Giorgio Napolitano of Italy; Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius; Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John O. Brennan; and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary Sebelius.

Remarks on the Declaration by the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate Change in L'Aquila, Italy
July 9, 2009

Buona sera. Good afternoon. We have just finished a productive meeting of the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate Change, and I'd like to begin by recognizing Prime Minister Berlusconi for cochairing this forum, as well as the extraordinary hospitality that he, his team, and the people of L'Aquila and the people of Italy have shown us during this stay. We are very grateful to all of you. I also want to thank the 17 other leaders who participated.

We had a candid and open discussion about the growing threat of climate change and what our nations must do, both individually and collectively, to address it. And while we don't expect to solve this problem in one meeting or

one summit, I believe we've made some important strides forward as we move towards Copenhagen.

I don't think I have to emphasize that climate change is one of the defining challenges of our time. The science is clear and conclusive, and the impacts can no longer be ignored. Ice sheets are melting; sea levels are rising; our oceans are becoming more acidic. And we've already seen its effects on weather patterns, our food and water sources, our health and our habitats.

Every nation on this planet is at risk, and just as no one nation is responsible for climate change, no one nation can address it alone. And that's why, back in April, I convened this forum of the world's major economies who are responsible for more than three-quarters of the world's carbon pollution. And it's why we've gathered again here today.

Each of our nations comes to the table with different needs, different priorities, different levels of development. And developing nations have real and understandable concerns about the role they will play in these efforts. They want to make sure that they do not have to sacrifice their aspirations for development and higher living standards. Yet, with most of the growth in projected emissions coming from these countries, their active participation is a prerequisite for a solution.

We also agree that developed countries, like my own, have a historic responsibility to take the lead. We have the much larger carbon footprint per capita, and I know that in the past, the United States has sometimes fallen short of meeting our responsibilities. So let me be clear: Those days are over. One of my highest priorities as President is to drive a clean energy transformation of our economy, and over the past 6 months, the United States has taken steps towards this goal.

We've made historic investments in the billions of dollars in developing clean energy technologies. We're on track to create thousands of new jobs across America—on solar initiatives and wind projects and biofuel projects, trying to show that there is no contradiction between environmentally sustainable growth and robust economic growth.

We've also for the first time created a national policy raising our fuel efficiency standards that will result in savings of 1.8 billion barrels of oil over the lifetime of vehicles sold in the next 5 years alone. And we just passed in our House of Representatives the first climate change legislation that would cut carbon pollution by more than 80 percent by 2050.

These are very significant steps in the United States. They're not as far as some countries have gone, but they are further than others, and I think that as I wrestle with these issues politically in my own country, I've come to see that it is going to be absolutely critical that all of us go beyond what's expected if we're going to achieve our goals. During the course of our 3 days in L'Aquila, we've taken also a number of significant steps forward. I want to briefly highlight them.

This week, the G–8 nations came to a historic consensus on concrete goals for reducing carbon emissions. We all agreed that by 2050 developed nations will reduce their emissions by 80 percent, and that we will work with all nations to cut global emissions in half. This ambitious effort is consistent with limiting global warming to no more than 2 degrees Celsius, which, as our declaration explicitly acknowledged for the first time, is what the mainstream of the scientific community has called for.

Today at the Major Economies Forum, developed and developing nations made further and unprecedented commitments to take strong and prompt action. Developed nations committed to reducing their emissions in absolute terms. And for the first time, developing nations also acknowledged the significance of the 2 degrees Celsius metric and agreed to take action to meaningfully lower their emissions relative to business as usual in the midterm—in the next decade or so. And they agreed that between now and Copenhagen, they will negotiate concrete goals to reduce their emissions by 2050.

We also agreed that the actions we take to achieve our reductions must be measurable, reportable, and verifiable. And we agreed to establish, at the earliest possible date, a peak year after which overall global emissions will start

falling. And these are all very significant steps forward in addressing this challenge.

In addition, we agreed to substantially increase financial resources to help developing nations create low-carbon growth plans and deploy clean energy technologies. We also recognize that climate change is already happening, and so we're going to have to help those affected countries adapt, particularly those who are least able to deal with its consequences because of a lack of resources. So we are looking at providing significant financial assistance to help these countries, and I want to particularly commend President Calderon of Mexico and Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom for coming up with some creative proposals that all of us are going to be exploring as to how we might finance this. We've asked the G–20 finance ministers to take up the climate financing issues and report back to us at the G–20 meeting in Pittsburgh in the fall.

Finally, we've agreed to create a new global partnership to drive the development of transformational clean energy technologies around the world. Our goal is to double the research and development investments we need to bring these technologies to market and to achieve our long-term energy and emissions goals. A number of countries have already agreed to take lead on developing particular technologies, including solar and smart grids, advanced vehicles, bio-energy, and more. Australia, for example, is creating a new center, which Kevin will be introducing shortly, and, I think, points to the ability for us to pool our resources in order to see the technological breakthroughs that are going to be necessary in order for us to solve this problem.

So let me just summarize. We've made a good start, but I am the first one to acknowledge that progress on this issue will not be easy. And I think that one of the things we're going to have to do is fight the temptation towards cynicism, to feel that the problem is so immense that somehow we cannot make significant strides.

It is no small task for 17 leaders to bridge their differences on an issue like climate change. We each have our national priorities and politics to contend with, and any steps we agree to here are intended to support and not replace the main U.N. negotiations with more than 190 countries. It's even more difficult in the context of a global recession, which I think adds to the fears that somehow addressing this issue will contradict the possibilities of robust global economic growth.

But ultimately, we have a choice. We can either shape our future, or we can let events shape it for us. We can fall back on the stale debates and old divisions, or we can decide to move forward and meet this challenge together. I think it's clear from our progress today which path is preferable and which path we have chosen. We know that the problems we face are made by human beings. That means it's within our capacity to solve them. The question is whether we will have the will to do so; whether we'll summon the courage and exercise the leadership to chart a new course. That's the responsibility of our generation; that must be our legacy for generations to come. And I am looking forward to being a strong partner in this effort.

With that, let me turn it over to Kevin Rudd, who, I think, has a significant announcement that fits in with the issues I raised earlier about technology challenges and our capacity to move forward and leapfrog over some of the old technologies that make this problem so difficult to deal with.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:41 p.m. in the G–8 press conference room at the Guardia di Finanza Inspectors' School. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy; Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom; and Prime Minister Kevin M. Rudd of Australia.

Declaration by the Leaders of the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate

July 9, 2009

We, the leaders of Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, the European Union, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States met as the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate in L'Aquila, Italy, on July 9, 2009, and declare as follows:

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time. As leaders of the world's major economies, both developed and developing, we intend to respond vigorously to this challenge, being convinced that climate change poses a clear danger requiring an extraordinary global response, that the response should respect the priority of economic and social development of developing countries, that moving to a low-carbon economy is an opportunity to promote continued economic growth and sustainable development, that the need for and deployment of transformational clean energy technologies at lowest possible cost are urgent, and that the response must involve balanced attention to mitigation and adaptation.

We reaffirm the objective, provisions and principles of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Recalling the Major Economies Declaration adopted in Toyako, Japan, in July 2008, and taking full account of decisions taken in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007, we resolve to spare no effort to reach agreement in Copenhagen, with each other and with the other Parties, to further implementation of the Convention.

Our vision for future cooperation on climate change, consistent with equity and our common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, includes the following:

1. Consistent with the Convention's objective and science:

Our countries will undertake transparent nationally appropriate mitigation actions, subject to applicable measurement, reporting, and verification, and prepare low-carbon growth plans. Developed countries among us will take the lead by promptly undertaking robust aggregate and individual reductions in the midterm consistent with our respective ambitious long-term objectives and will work together before Copenhagen to achieve a strong result in this regard. Developing countries among us will promptly undertake actions whose projected effects on emissions represent a meaningful deviation from business as usual in the midterm, in the context of sustainable development, supported by financing, technology, and capacity-building. The peaking of global and national emissions should take place as soon as possible, recognizing that the timeframe for peaking will be longer in developing countries, bearing in mind that social and economic development and poverty eradication are the first and overriding priorities in developing countries and that low-carbon development is indispensible to sustainable development. We recognize the scientific view that the increase in global average temperature above pre-industrial levels ought not to exceed 2 degrees C. In this regard and in the context of the ultimate objective of the Convention and the Bali Action Plan, we will work between now and Copenhagen, with each other and under the Convention, to identify a global goal for substantially reducing global emissions by 2050. Progress toward the global goal would be regularly reviewed, noting the importance of frequent, comprehensive, and accurate inventories.

We will take steps nationally and internationally, including under the Convention, to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and to enhance removals of greenhouse gas emissions by forests, including providing enhanced support to developing countries for such purposes.

2. Adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change is essential. Such effects are already taking place. Further, while increased mitigation efforts will reduce climate impacts, even the most aggressive mitigation efforts will not eliminate the need for substantial adaptation, particularly in developing countries which will be disproportionately affected. There is a

particular and immediate need to assist the poorest and most vulnerable to adapt to such effects. Not only are they most affected but they have contributed the least to the build up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Further support will need to be mobilized, should be based on need, and will include resources additional to existing financial assistance. We will work together to develop, disseminate, and transfer, as appropriate, technologies that advance adaptation efforts.

3. We are establishing a Global Partnership to drive transformational low-carbon, climate-friendly technologies. We will dramatically increase and coordinate public sector investments in research, development, and demonstration of these technologies, with a view to doubling such investments by 2015, while recognizing the importance of private investment, public-private partnerships and international cooperation, including regional innovation centers. Drawing on global best practice policies, we undertake to remove barriers, establish incentives, enhance capacity-building, and implement appropriate measures to aggressively accelerate deployment and transfer of key existing and new low-carbon technologies, in accordance with national circumstances. We welcome the leadership of individual countries to spearhead efforts among interested countries to advance actions on technologies such as energy efficiency; solar energy; smart grids; carbon capture, use, and storage; advanced vehicles; high-efficiency and lower-emissions coal technologies; bio-energy; and other clean technologies. Lead countries will report by November 15, 2009, on action plans and roadmaps, and make recommendations for further progress. We will consider ideas for appropriate approaches and arrangements to promote technology development, deployment, and transfer.

4. Financial resources for mitigation and adaptation will need to be scaled up urgently and substantially and should involve mobilizing resources to support developing countries. Financing to address climate change will derive from multiple sources, including both public and private funds and carbon markets. Additional investment in developing countries should be mobilized, including by creating incentives for and removing barriers to funding flows. Greater predictability of international support should be promoted. Financing of supported actions should be measurable, reportable, and verifiable. The expertise of existing institutions should be drawn upon, and such institutions should work in an inclusive way and should be made more responsive to developing country needs. Climate financing should complement efforts to promote development in accordance with national priorities and may include both program-based and project-based approaches. The governance of mechanisms disbursing funds should be transparent, fair, effective, efficient, and reflect balanced representation. Accountability in the use of resources should be ensured. An arrangement to match diverse funding needs and resources should be created, and utilize where appropriate, public and private expertise. We agreed to further consider proposals for the establishment of international funding arrangements, including the proposal by Mexico for a Green Fund.

5. Our countries will continue to work together constructively to strengthen the world's ability to combat climate change, including through the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate. In particular, our countries will continue meeting throughout the balance of this year in order to facilitate agreement in Copenhagen.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this declaration.

The President's News Conference in L'Aquila, Italy
July 10, 2009

The President. Thank you. Please, everybody have a seat. I apologize for being a little bit late. Good afternoon. We have just concluded the final session of what has been a

highly productive summit here in L'Aquila. And before I discuss what we've achieved these past 3 days, I'd like to take a moment to express my thanks to Prime Minister Berlusconi, his staff, the people of Italy for their extraordinary hospitality and hard work in setting up this summit. And particularly, I want to thank the people of L'Aquila for welcoming us to your home at this difficult time. We've seen how you've come together and taken care of each other, and we've been moved by your courage and your resilience and your kindness.

I'm confident that L'Aquila will be rebuilt, its splendor will be restored, and its people will serve as an example for all of us in how people can rise up from tragedy and begin anew. And we will keep this place and its people in our prayers and our thoughts in the months and years ahead.

We've come to L'Aquila for a very simple reason: Because the challenges of our time threaten the peace and prosperity of every single nation, and no one nation can meet these challenges alone. The threat of climate change can't be contained by borders on a map, and the theft of loose nuclear materials could lead to the extermination of any city on Earth. Reckless actions by a few have fueled a recession that spans the globe, and rising food prices means that 100 million of our fellow citizens are expected to fall into desperate poverty.

So right now, at this defining moment, we face a choice: We can either shape our future or let events shape it for us. We can let the stale debates and old disagreements of the past divide us, or we can recognize our shared interests and shared aspirations and work together to create a safer and cleaner and more prosperous world for future generations. I believe it's clear from our progress these past few days the path that we must choose.

This gathering has included not just leaders of the G–8, but leaders from more than 25 nations, as well as representatives from major international organizations such as the U.N., IMF, WTO, and others. And after weeks of preparation and 3 days of candid and spirited discussions, we've agreed to take significant measures to address some of the most pressing threats facing our environment, our global economy, and our international security.

Let me outline what I believe have been the most significant items that emerged from L'Aquila. First, there was widespread consensus that we must all continue our work to restore economic growth and reform our national and international financial regulatory systems. I'm pleased that the United States has taken the lead on this reform at home, with a sweeping overhaul of our regulatory system, a transformation on a scale that we have not seen since the aftermath of the Great Depression.

But while our markets are improving and we appear to have averted global collapse, we know that too many people are still struggling. So we agree that full recovery is still a ways off; that it would be premature to begin winding down our stimulus plans; and that we must sustain our support for those plans to lay the foundation for a strong and lasting recovery. We also agreed that it's equally important that we return to fiscal sustainability in the midterm after the recovery is completed.

Second, we agreed to historic measures that will help stop the spread of nuclear weapons and move us closer to the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons. In Prague, I laid out a comprehensive strategy to advance global security by pursuing that goal. In Moscow, President Medvedev and I agreed to substantially reduce our warheads and delivery systems in a treaty that will be completed later this year.

And this week, the leaders of the G–8 nations embraced the strategy I outlined in Prague, which includes measures to strengthen the Non-Proliferation Treaty, to encourage nations to meet their arms control, disarmament, and nonproliferation commitments, and to secure nuclear weapons and vulnerable nuclear materials so they don't fall into the hands of terrorists.

I also invited leaders from the broader group of nations here to attend a global nuclear summit that I will host in Washington in March of next year, where we will discuss steps we can take to secure loose nuclear materials, combat smuggling, and deter, detect, and disrupt attempts at nuclear terrorism.

Now, we face a real-time challenge on nuclear proliferation in Iran. And at this summit, the G–8 nations came together to issue a strong statement calling on Iran to fulfill its responsibilities to the international community without further delay. We remain seriously concerned about the appalling events surrounding the Presidential election. And we're deeply troubled by the proliferation risks Iran's nuclear program poses to the world.

We've offered Iran a path towards assuming its rightful place in the world, but with that right comes responsibilities. And we hope Iran will make the choice to fulfill them, and we will take stock of Iran's progress when we see each other this September at the G–20 meeting.

Third, we took groundbreaking steps forward to address the threat of climate change in our time. The G–8 nations agreed that by 2050, we'll reduce our emissions by 80 percent, and that we'll work with all nations to cut global emissions in half. And 17 of the world's leading economies, both developed and developing nations alike, made unprecedented commitments to reduce their emissions and made significant progress on finance, adaptation, and technology issues.

In the United States, we've already passed legislation in the House of Representatives that puts us on track to meeting this 80 percent goal. And we made historic clean energy investments in our stimulus, as well as setting aside—setting new fuel efficiency standards to increase mileage and decrease pollution, because we believe that the nation that can build a 21st-century clean energy economy is the nation that will lead the 21st-century global economy.

We did not reach agreement on every issue, and we still have much work ahead on climate change, but these achievements are highly meaningful, and they'll generate significant momentum as we head into the talks at Copenhagen and beyond.

Finally, we have committed to investing $20 billion in food security—agricultural development programs to help fight world hunger. This is in addition to the emergency humanitarian aid that we provide. And I should just note that going into the meeting, we had agreed to 15 billion; we exceeded that mark and obtained an additional $5 billion of hard commitments.

We do not view this assistance as an end in itself. We believe that the purpose of aid must be to create the conditions where it's no longer needed, to help people become self-sufficient, provide for their families, and lift their standards of living. And that's why I proposed a new approach to this issue, one endorsed by all the leaders here, a coordinated effort to support comprehensive plans created by the countries themselves, with help from multilateral institutions like the World Bank when appropriate, along with significant and sustained financial commitments from our nations.

I also want to speak briefly about additional one-on-one meetings I had with leaders here outside of the G–8 context. These meetings were tremendously valuable and productive. We spoke about how we can forge a strong, coordinated, and effective response to nuclear proliferation threats from Iran and North Korea. We also discussed challenges we faced in managing our economies, steps we can take together in combating climate change, and other important matters. And I believe we laid a solid foundation on these issues.

Ultimately, this summit and the work we've done here reflects a recognition that the defining problems of our time will not be solved without collective action. No one corner of the globe can wall itself off from the challenges of the 21st century or the needs and aspirations of fellow nations. The only way forward is through shared and persistent effort to combat threats to our peace, our prosperity, and our common humanity wherever they may exist.

None of this will be easy. As we worked this week to find common ground, we have not solved all our problems, and we've not agreed on every point. But we've shown that it is possible to move forward and make real and unprecedented progress together. And I'm confident we'll continue to do so in the months and years ahead.

So with that, let me take a few questions. I've got a list that I'm working off of, and I'm

going to start with Peter Baker [New York Times].

Peter.

Combating World Hunger/Government Corruption on the African Continent/Ghana

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. I'm sorry, your mike didn't—is not working there.

Q. Hello?

The President. Yes.

Q. Yes, that's better. Thank you, sir.

Mr. President, we were told that you made your appeal for the food security money during the meetings personal by citing your family experience in Kenya, your cousin and so forth. I wonder if you could relate to us a little bit of what you said then and talk about what—your family experience, how that influences your policies and approach.

The President. What you heard is true, and I started with this fairly telling point, that when my father traveled to the United States from Kenya to study, at that time the per capita income and Gross Domestic Product of Kenya was higher than South Korea's. Today, obviously, South Korea is a highly developed and relatively wealthy country, and Kenya is still struggling with deep poverty in much of the country.

And the question I asked in the meeting was, why is that? There had been some talk about the legacies of colonialism and other policies by wealthier nations, and without in any way diminishing that history, the point I made was that the South Korean Government, working with the private sector and civil society, was able to create a set of institutions that provided transparency and accountability and efficiency that allowed for extraordinary economic progress, and that there was no reason why African countries could not do the same. And yet in many African countries, if you want to start a business or get a job, you still have to pay a bribe; that there remains too much—there remains a lack of transparency.

And the point that I was trying to underscore is, is that as we think about this issue of food security, which is of tremendous importance—I mean, we've got 100 million people who dropped into further dire poverty as a consequence of this recession; we estimate that a billion people are hungry around the globe, and so wealthier nations have a moral obligation as well as a national security interest in providing assistance. And we've got to meet those responsibilities.

The flip side is, is that countries in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere in the world that are suffering from extreme poverty have an obligation to use the assistance that's available in a way that is transparent, accountable, and that builds on rule of law and other institutional reforms that will allow long-term improvement.

There is no reason why Africa cannot be self-sufficient when it comes to food. It has sufficient arable land. What's lacking is the right seeds, the right irrigation, but also the kinds of institutional mechanisms that ensure that a farmer is going to be able to grow crops, get them to market, get a fair price. And so all these things have to be part of a comprehensive plan, and that's what I was trying to underscore during the meeting today.

Q. And your own family, sir?

The President. What's that?

Q. Your own family?

The President. Well, the point I was making is—my father traveled to the United States a mere 50 years ago, and yet now I have family members who live in villages—they themselves are not going hungry—but live in villages where hunger is real. And so this is something that I understand in very personal terms. And if you talk to people on the ground in Africa, certainly in Kenya, they will say that part of the issue here is the institutions aren't working for ordinary people. And so governance is a vital concern that has to be addressed.

Now, keep in mind—I want to be very careful—Africa is a continent, not a country, and so you can't extrapolate from the experience of one country. And there are a lot of good things happening. Part of the reason that we're traveling to Ghana is because you've got there a functioning democracy, a President who's serious about reducing corruption, and you've seen significant economic growth.

So I don't want to overly generalize, but I do want to make the broader point that a government that is stable, that is not engaging in tribal

conflicts, that can give people confidence and security that their work will be rewarded, that is investing in its people and their skills and talents, those countries can succeed, regardless of their history.

All right. Michael Fletcher, the Washington Post.

Nuclear Arms Reduction

Q. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President. As you've pushed for an agreement to reduce nuclear stockpiles between Russia and the U.S., part of your rationale has been that you want to have the moral authority to then turn to North Korea and Iran to get them to suspend their programs. Why will they listen to what the U.S. and Russia have to say? What would it matter to them what we do?

The President. Well, I don't think it matters so much necessarily that they will listen to the United States or Russia individually. But it gives us the capacity, as the two nuclear superpowers, to make appeals to the broader world community in a consistent way about the dangers of nuclear proliferation and the need to reduce that danger and hopefully at some point in time eliminate it.

So there are countries that have decided not to pursue nuclear weapons. Brazil, South Africa, Libya have all made a decision not to pursue nuclear weapons. Now, part of the concept behind the Non-Proliferation Treaty was countries could develop peaceful nuclear energy; they would not pursue nuclear weapons if they were signatories to the treaty, and in turn, the United States and Russia would also significantly reduce their nuclear stockpiles.

And so part of the goal here is to show that the U.S. and Russia are going to be fulfilling their commitments so that other countries feel that this is an international effort and it's not something simply being imposed by the United States or Russia or members of the nuclear club. And I am confident that we can rebuild a nonproliferation framework that works for all countries. And I think it's important for us to establish a set of international norms that can be verified, that can be enforced. And when we are speaking to Iran or North Korea, it's not a matter of singling them out, but it—rather it's a set of international norms of behavior that we're expecting everybody to abide by. Okay?

Paolo Valentino [Corriere della Sera].

Group of Eight Nations

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. It seems that yesterday morning you had a very spirited and lively discussion within the—with the G–8-plus-5-plus-1, ignited by President Lula objection to the format, to the adequacy of the G–8 as a forum. And, well, I would like—what was your argument in this discussion and whether or not you have the feeling that the days of the G–8 are over?

The President. Yes.

Q. And a very—a second question, but very light, after 6 months wheeling and dealing with these international forums—G–20, NATO, and G–8—do you find it more complicated or less complicated to deal with that than with the American Congress? [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, the—on the second question, it's not even close. I mean, Congress is always tougher. But in terms of the issue of the G's and what's the appropriate international structure and framework, I have to tell you, in the discussions I listened more than I spoke, although what I said privately was the same thing that I've said publicly, which is that there is no doubt that we have to update and refresh and renew the international institutions that were set up in a different time and place. Some—the United Nations—date back to post-World War II; others, like the G–8, are 30 years old. And so there's no sense that those institutions can adequately capture the enormous changes that have taken place during those intervening decades. I—what, exactly, is the right format is a question that I think will be debated.

One point I did make in the meeting is that what I've noticed is everybody wants the smallest possible group, smallest possible organization that includes them. So if they're the 21st largest nation in the world, then they want the G–21, and think it's highly unfair if they've been cut out.

What's also true is that part of the challenge here is revitalizing the United Nations, because

a lot of energy is going into these various summits and these organizations in part because there's a sense that when it comes to big, tough problems, the U.N. General Assembly is not always working as effectively and rapidly as it needs to. So I'm a strong supporter of the U.N., and I said so in this meeting, but it has to be reformed and revitalized, and this is something that I've said to the Secretary-General.

One thing I think is absolutely true is, is that for us to think we can somehow deal with some of these global challenges in the absence of major powers, like China, India, and Brazil, seems to me wrong-headed. So they are going to have to be included in these conversations. To have entire continents like Africa or Latin America not adequately represented in these major international forums and decisionmaking bodies is not going to work.

So I think we're in a transition period. We're trying to find the right shape that combines the efficiency and capacity for action with inclusiveness. And my expectation is, is that over the next several years, you'll see an evolution, and we'll be able to find the right combination.

The one thing I will be looking forward to is fewer summit meetings, because, as you said, I've only been in office 6 months now, and there have been a lot of these. And I think that there's a possibility of streamlining them and making them more effective. The United States obviously is a absolutely committed partner to concerted international action, but we need to, I think, make sure that they're as productive as possible. Okay?

Hans Nichols [Bloomberg].

Health Care Reform

Q. Hans had other obligations, sir.

The President. Yes, I notice you're not Hans. [*Laughter*]

Q. Right. Roger Runningen [Bloomberg]—we swapped.

The President. There you go.

Q. Anyway, thank you very much for the question.

I'd like to return to domestic issues, Mr. President, health care. The momentum seems to have slowed a bit. The Senate Finance Committee is still wrestling with the cost issue. The Blue Dog Democrats, members of your own party, yesterday said they had strong reservations about what's developing so far. I was just wondering, when are you going to be jumping in really full force with this? Do you have any sweeteners planned? What is your push before the August recess?

The President. Well, we jumped in with both feet. Our team is working with Members of Congress every day on this issue, and it is my highest legislative priority over the next month. So I think it's important just to recognize we are closer to achieving serious health care reform that cuts costs, provides coverage to American families, allows them to keep their doctors and plans that are working for them.

We're closer to that significant reform than at any time in recent history. That doesn't make it easy; it's hard. And we are having a whole series of constant negotiations. This is not simply a Democratic versus Republican issue. This is a House versus Senate issue; this is different committees that have different priorities.

My job is to make sure that I've set some clear parameters in terms of what I want to achieve. We have to bend the cost curve on health care, and there are some very specific ways of doing that, game changers that incentivize quality as opposed to quantity, that emphasize prevention.

There are a whole host of things that I've put on the table that I want to see included. I've said that it's got to be budget neutral, it's got to be deficit neutral, and so whatever bill is produced has to be paid for, and that creates some difficulties because people would like to get the good stuff without paying for it.

And so there are going to be some tough negotiations in the days and weeks to come, but I'm confident that we're going to get it done. And I think that, appropriately, all of you as reporters are reporting on the game. What I'm trying to keep focused on are the people out in States all across the country that are getting hammered by rising premiums. They're losing their jobs and suddenly losing their health care. They are going into debt. Some are going into bankruptcy, small businesses and large businesses that are feeling enormous pressure. And I'm also looking at the Federal budget.

There's been a lot of talk about the deficit and the debt and—from my Republican colleagues, you know, why isn't Obama doing something about this, ignoring the fact that we got into the worst recession since the Great Depression with a $1.3 billion [trillion]* deficit. Fair enough. This is occurring on my watch.

What cannot be denied is that the only way to get a handle on our medium- and long-term budget deficits is if we corral and contain health care costs. Nobody denies this. And so my hope is, is that everybody who is talking about deficit reduction gets serious about reducing the cost of health care and puts some serious proposals on the table. And I think it's going to get done.

It is going to be hard, though, because as I said, I think, in one of the town hall meetings that I had, as dissatisfied as Americans may be with the health care system, as concerned as they are about the prospects that they may lose their job or their premiums may keep on rising, they're also afraid of the unknown. And we have a long history in America of scaring people that they're going to lose their doctor, they're going to lose their health care plans, they're going to be stuck with some bureaucratic government system that's not responsive to their needs. And overcoming that fear—fear that is often actively promoted by special interests who profit from the existing system—is a challenge.

And so my biggest job, even as my staff is working on the day-to-day negotiations with the House and Senate staffs, my biggest job is to explain to the American people why this is so important and give them confidence that we can do better than we're doing right now.

Q. Sir—[*inaudible*].

The President. Yes.

Q. Is it pretty much a do-or-die by the August recess?

The President. I never believe anything is do-or-die. But I really want to get it done by the August recess. [*Laughter*]

Christi Parsons [Chicago Tribune]—hometown girl. Is Christi around?

Q. She's not here, sir.

The President. Christi's not here? I'm disappointed. Do we have any members of the foreign press here? Yes, I'll use Christi's spot for—just so that you guys have a chance to ask a question.

State Sovereignty/Humanitarian Intervention

Q. Thank you very much. I'm almost from hometown——

The President. I'm sorry, I can't hear you though. Can somebody make sure the mike is working?

Q. It's on?

The President. Yes.

Q. Yes. On this trip, you have been talking about the state sovereignty as a cornerstone of international order. How do you reconcile that with the concept of responsibility to protect, which used to be the cornerstone for lots of victims?

The President. I'm sorry, how do I reconcile that with the responsibility to protect, which used to be what?

Q. The cornerstone of hope for lots of people in postwar concept.

The President. Well, if I understand your question correctly, on the one hand, we think that respecting the sovereignties of nation-states is important. We don't want stronger nations bullying weaker nations. On the other hand, where you have nations that are oppressing their people, isn't there an international responsibility to intervene? It is a—one of the most difficult questions in international affairs. And I don't think that there is a clean formula. What I would say is, is that in general, it's important for the sovereignty of nations to be respected and to resolve conflicts between nations through diplomacy and through international organizations in trying to set up international norms that countries want to meet.

There are going to be exceptional circumstances in which I think the need for international intervention becomes a moral imperative, the most obvious example being in a

* White House correction.

situation like Rwanda where genocide has occurred.

And Gordon Brown, during the last session, told a incredibly powerful story. He—if—and I may not be getting all the details perfectly right, but he said he had gone to Rwanda, went to a—some sort of museum or exhibition that commemorated the—or marked the tragedy in Rwanda, and there was a photograph of a 12-year-old boy, and it gave his name, and that he loved soccer, and he wanted to be a doctor, and provided his biography. And the last line on this exhibit said that right before he and his mother was killed, he turned to his mother, and he said, Don't worry, the United Nations is going to come save us."

And that voice has to be heard in international relations. The threshold at which international intervention is appropriate, I think, has to be very high. There has to be a strong international outrage at what's taking place.

It's not always going to be a neat decision, and there are going to be objections to just about any decision, because there are some in the international community who believe that state sovereignty is sacrosanct, and you never intervene under any circumstances in somebody's internal affairs.

I think rather than focus on hypotheticals, what my administration wants to do is to build up international norms, put pressure—economic, diplomatic, et cetera—on nations that are not acting in accordance with universal values towards their citizens, but not hypothesize on particular circumstances, take each case as it comes. Okay?

Richard Wolf [USA Today].

Iran

Q. I guess I have to follow on that, Mr. President. Is Iran in that category? And are you disappointed that while you came up with a statement of condemnation from the G–8, you did not come up with any kind of extra sanctions having to do with their crackdown on protestors?

The President. Yes, I have to say, I read, Peter, your article and maybe some others. This notion that we were trying to get sanctions or that this was a forum in which we could get sanctions is not accurate.

What we wanted was exactly what we got, which is a statement of unity and strong condemnation about the appalling treatment of peaceful protestors postelection in Iran, as well as some behavior that just violates basic international norms: storming of Embassies, arresting Embassy personnel, restrictions on journalists. And so I think that the real story here was consensus in that statement, including Russia, which doesn't make statements like that lightly.

Now, there is—the other story there was the agreement that we will reevaluate Iran's posture towards negotiating the cessation of a nuclear weapons policy. We'll evaluate that at the G–20 meeting in September. And I think what that does is it provides a timeframe. The international community has said, here's a door you can walk through that allows you to lessen tensions and more fully join the international community. If Iran chooses not to walk through that door, then you have on record the G–8, to begin with, but, I think, potentially a lot of other countries that are going to say we need to take further steps. And that's been always our premise, is that we provide that door, but we also say we're not going to just wait indefinitely and allow for the development of a nuclear weapon, the breach of international treaties, and wake up one day and find ourselves in a much worse situation and unable to act.

So my hope is, is that the Iranian leadership will look at the statement coming out of the G–8 and recognize that world opinion is clear.

All right, thank you very much, everybody. *Arrivederci.*

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:18 p.m. in the U.S. press filing center at the Guardia di Finanza Inspectors' School. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy; President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia; President John Evans Atta Mills of Ghana; Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations; and Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom. A reporter referred to President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President John Evans Atta Mills of Ghana in Accra, Ghana
July 11, 2009

President Obama. Hello, everybody.

President Mills. We, indeed, consider as well as an honor and a privilege to have with us President Barack Obama. We're happy that this is the first country that he's visiting as U.S. President, and we like the positive signals that this visit is sending and will continue to send.

We want to congratulate you on the choice of Ghana and want to tell you that this encourages us also to sustain the gains that we have made in our democratic processes. And many Ghanaians, indeed, I can say without any fear of contradiction that all Ghanaians want to see you. I wish it was possible for me to send you to every home in Ghana. [*Laughter*]

But, once again, welcome to your own home, and we hope that this relationship is going to go from strength to strength, and that this monumental visit of yours is going to be all to the benefit of our respective people and to Accra, Ghana.

President Obama. Well, it is a great pleasure to be here in Ghana, and we are grateful for the extraordinary hospitality that's been shown to myself and my family and my entire staff during our visit here. I'll have the opportunity to address Parliament and have more extensive remarks, as well as upon departure, I will have the opportunity to address the Ghanaian people more widely.

Let me just say that we wanted to make sure to come to an African country after the G–8 and after my visit to Moscow to emphasize that Africa is not separate from world affairs. There's a tendency, I think, for U.S. Presidents to take a week sometime during their term and there's a separate visit to Africa, and we wanted to send a message that we have a continuing interest in Africa's security, in Africa's economy, in Africa's social and political development, because we live in an interrelated world and what happens here has an impact everywhere.

And coming to Ghana specifically, partly, was prompted by the fact that I'm very familiar with East Africa and I've been to South Africa, but I have never been to a West African country, and partly, it was to recognize the extraordinary progress that has been made in Ghana around democratic issues.

We had—President Mills is an example of a democratic leader who did it the right way and continues to do it the right way, but it goes beyond one individual. There are a set of institutions here that are sustaining democracy and openness and participation. You have an economy that has been well managed.

Obviously, this is a difficult time throughout the world economically, and Ghana is no exception; it's been impacted by the world recession. But there's been a greater level of transparency and openness. The growth strategy here in Ghana have been ones that are actually delivering improved standards of living for the people.

So we think that Ghana can be an extraordinary model for success throughout the continent, and we are very much looking forward to strengthening what is already a strong friendship between the United States and Ghana for many years to come.

So thank you, again, for your hospitality. We are very grateful.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:11 a.m. in the Presidential Palace. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at La General Hospital in Accra
July 11, 2009

Part of the reason this is so important is throughout Africa, the rates of both infant mortality, but also maternal mortality is still far too high, I mean, by a factor of—a multiple of

tens compared to many other parts of the world. And so these kinds of programs that provide sound prenatal care and maternal care are extraordinarily important, and this is a model of the kind of clinics where people are able to get these important services.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:17 a.m. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Weekly Address
July 11, 2009

This week we've made important progress towards the goal of bringing about change abroad and change at home. During my visit to Russia, we began the process of resetting relations so that we can address key national priorities like the threat of nuclear weapons and extremism. At the G–8 summit, leaders from nearly 30 nations met to discuss how we'll collectively confront the urgent challenges of our time, from managing the global recession to fighting global warming to addressing global hunger and poverty. And in Ghana, I laid out my agenda for supporting democracy and development in Africa and around the world. But even as we make progress on these challenges abroad, my thoughts are on the state of our economy at home. And that's what I want to talk to you about today.

We came into office facing the most severe economic downturn since the Great Depression. At the time, we were losing, on average, 700,000 jobs a month, and many feared that our financial system was on the verge of collapse.

As a result of the swift and aggressive action we took in the first few months of this year, we've been able to pull our financial system and our economy back from the brink. We took steps to restart lending to families and businesses, stabilize our major financial institutions, and help homeowners stay in their homes and pay their mortgages. We also passed the largest and most sweeping economic recovery plan in our Nation's history.

The Recovery Act wasn't designed to restore the economy to full health on its own, but to provide the boost necessary to stop the free fall. It was designed to spur demand and get people spending again and cushion those who had borne the brunt of the crisis. And it was designed to save jobs and create new ones.

In a little over 100 days, this Recovery Act has worked as intended. It's already extended unemployment insurance and health insurance to those who have lost their jobs in this recession. It's delivered $43 billion in tax relief to American working families and businesses. Without the help the Recovery Act has provided to struggling States, its estimated that State deficits would be nearly twice as large as they are now, resulting in tens of thousands of additional layoffs, layoffs that would affect police officers, teachers, and firefighters.

The Recovery Act has allowed small businesses and clean energy companies to hire new workers or scrap their plans for eliminating current jobs. And it's led to new jobs building roads, bridges, and other infrastructure projects, thousands of which are only beginning now. In the months to come, thousands more projects will begin, leading to additional jobs.

Now, I realize that when we passed this Recovery Act, there were those who felt that doing nothing was somehow an answer. Today, some of those same critics are already judging the effort a failure, although they have yet to offer a plausible alternative. Others believed that the recovery plan should have been even larger, and they're already calling for a second recovery plan.

But as I made clear at the time it was passed, the Recovery Act was not designed to work in 4 months, it was designed to work over 2 years. We also knew that it would take some time for the money to get out the door, because we're committed to spending it in a way that's effective and transparent. Crucially, this is a plan that will also accelerate greatly through the summer and the fall. We must let it work the way it's supposed to, with the understanding that in any recession, unemployment tends to

recover more slowly than other measures of economic activity.

Now, I'm confident that the United States of America will weather this economic storm. But once we clear away the wreckage, the real question is what we will build in its place. Even as we rescue this economy from a full blown crisis, I've insisted that we must rebuild it better than before.

Without serious reforms, we are destined to either see more crises, or suffer stagnant growth rates for the foreseeable future, or a combination of the two. That's a future I absolutely reject. And that's why we're laying a new foundation that's not only strong enough to withstand the challenges of the 21st century, but one that will allow us to thrive and compete in a global economy. That means investing in the jobs of the future, training our workers to compete for those jobs, and controlling the health care costs that are driving us into debt.

Through the clean energy investment we've made in the Recovery Act, we're already seeing startups and small businesses make plans to create thousands of new jobs. In California, 3,000 people will be employed to build a new solar plant. In Michigan, investments in wind turbines and wind technology is expected to create over 2,600 jobs. And a few weeks ago, the House of Representatives passed historic legislation that would finally make clean energy the profitable kind of energy, leading to whole new industries and jobs that can't be outsourced.

To give our workers the skills and education they need to compete for the high-tech, high-wage jobs of the future, we're working on reforms that will close achievement gaps, ensure that our schools meet high standards, reward our teachers for performance and give them new pathways to advancement.

Finally, we've made important progress in the last few weeks on health care reform that will finally control the costs that are driving our families, our businesses, and our Government into debt. Both the Senate and the House have now produced legislation that will bring down costs, provide better care for patients, and curb the worst practices of insurance companies, so that they can no longer deny Americans coverage based on a preexisting medical condition. It's a plan that would also allow Americans to keep their health insurance if they lose their job or if they change their job. And it would set up a health insurance exchange, a marketplace that will allow families and small businesses to access one-stop shopping for quality, affordable coverage, and help them compare prices and choose the plan that best suits their needs. One such choice would be a public option that would make health care more affordable through competition that keeps the insurance companies honest.

One other point: Part of what makes our current economic situation so challenging is that we already had massive deficits as the recession gathered force. And although the Recovery Act represents just a small fraction of our long-term debt, people have legitimate questions as to whether we can afford reform without making our deficits much worse.

So let me be clear: I have been firm in insisting that both health care reform and clean energy legislation cannot add to our deficit. And I intend to continue the work of reducing waste, eliminating programs that don't work, and reforming our entitlement programs to ensure that our long-term deficits are brought under control.

I said when I took office that it would take many months to move our economy from recession to recovery and ultimately to prosperity. We're not there yet, and I continue to believe that even one American out of work is one too many. But we're moving in the right direction. We're cleaning up the wreckage of this storm. And we are laying a firmer, stronger foundation so that we may better weather whatever future storms may come. This year has been and will continue to be a year of rescuing our economy from disaster.

But just as important will be the work of rebuilding a long-term engine for economic growth. It won't be easy, and there will continue to be those who argue that we have to put off hard decisions that we have already deferred for far too long. But earlier generations of Americans didn't build this great country by

fearing the future and shrinking our dreams. This generation—our generation—has to show that same courage and determination. I believe we will.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 8:45 a.m., e.e.s.t., on July 9 at the Ron Hotel in L'Aquila, Italy, for broadcast on July 11. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 10, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m., e.d.t., on July 11. Due to the 4-hour time difference, the address was released after the President's remarks at La General Hospital in Accra, Ghana.

Remarks to the Ghanaian Parliament in Accra
July 11, 2009

[*A trumpet played as the President prepared to speak.*]

I like this. Thank you. Thank you. I think Congress needs one of those horns. [*Laughter*] That sounds pretty good. Sounds like Louis Armstrong back there. [*Laughter*]

Good afternoon, everybody. It is a great honor for me to be in Accra and to speak to the Representatives of the people of Ghana. I am deeply grateful for the welcome that I've received, as are Michelle and Malia and Sasha Obama. Ghana's history is rich, the ties between our two countries are strong, and I am proud that this is my first visit to sub-Saharan Africa as President of the United States of America.

I want to thank Madam Speaker and all the members of the house of representatives for hosting us today. I want to thank President Mills for his outstanding leadership. To the former Presidents—Jerry Rawlings, former President Kufuor—the Vice President, Chief Justice, thanks to all of you for your extraordinary hospitality and the wonderful institutions that you've built here in Ghana.

I'm speaking to you at the end of a long trip. I began in Russia for a summit between two great powers. I traveled to Italy for a meeting of the world's leading economies. And I've come here to Ghana for a simple reason: The 21st century will be shaped by what happens not just in Rome or Moscow or Washington, but by what happens in Accra as well.

This is the simple truth of a time when the boundaries between people are overwhelmed by our connections. Your prosperity can expand America's prosperity, your health and security can contribute to the world's health and security, and the strength of your democracy can help advance human rights for people everywhere.

So I do not see the countries and peoples of Africa as a world apart; I see Africa as a fundamental part of our interconnected world, as partners with America on behalf of the future we want for all of our children. That partnership must be grounded in mutual responsibility and mutual respect. And that is what I want to speak with you about today.

We must start from the simple premise that Africa's future is up to Africans. I say this knowing full well the tragic past that has sometimes haunted this part of the world. After all, I have the blood of Africa within me, and my family's own story encompasses both the tragedies and triumphs of the larger African story.

Some of you know my grandfather was a cook for the British in Kenya, and though he was a respected elder in his village, his employers called him "boy" for much of his life. He was on the periphery of Kenya's liberation struggles, but he was still imprisoned briefly during repressive times. In his life, colonialism wasn't simply the creation of unnatural borders or unfair terms of trade; it was something experienced personally, day after day, year after year.

My father grew up herding goats in a tiny village, an impossible distance away from the American universities where he would come to get an education. He came of age at a moment of extraordinary promise for Africa. The struggles of his own father's generation were giving birth to new nations, beginning right here in Ghana. Africans were educating and asserting themselves in new ways, and history was on the move.

But despite the progress that has been made—and there has been considerable progress in many parts of Africa—we also know that much of that promise has yet to be fulfilled. Countries like Kenya had a per capita economy larger than South Korea's when I was born. They have badly been outpaced. Disease and conflict have ravaged parts of the African Continent.

In many places, the hope of my father's generation gave way to cynicism, even despair. Now, it's easy to point fingers and to pin the blame of these problems on others. Yes, a colonial map that made little sense helped to breed conflict. The West has often approached Africa as a patron or a source of resources rather than a partner. But the West is not responsible for the destruction of the Zimbabwean economy over the last decade, or wars in which children are enlisted as combatants. In my father's life, it was partly tribalism and patronage and nepotism in an independent Kenya that for a long stretch derailed his career, and we know that this kind of corruption is still a daily fact of life for far too many.

Now, we know that's also not the whole story. Here in Ghana, you show us a face of Africa that is too often overlooked by a world that sees only tragedy or a need for charity. The people of Ghana have worked hard to put democracy on a firmer footing, with repeated peaceful transfers of power even in the wake of closely contested elections. And by the way, can I say that for that, the minority deserves as much credit as the majority. And with improved governance and an emerging civil society, Ghana's economy has shown impressive rates of growth.

This progress may lack the drama of 20th century liberation struggles, but make no mistake: It will ultimately be more significant. For just as it is important to emerge from the control of other nations, it is even more important to build one own—one's own nation.

So I believe that this moment is just as promising for Ghana and for Africa as the moment when my father came of age and new nations were being born. This is a new moment of great promise. Only this time, we've learned that it will not be giants like Nkrumah and Kenyatta who will determine Africa's future. Instead, it will be you, the men and women in Ghana's Parliament, the people you represent. It will be the young people brimming with talent and energy and hope who can claim the future that so many in previous generations never realized.

Now, to realize that promise, we must first recognize a fundamental truth that you have given life to in Ghana: Development depends on good governance. That is the ingredient which has been missing in far too many places for far too long. That's the change that can unlock Africa's potential. And that is a responsibility that can only be met by Africans.

As for America and the West, our commitment must be measured by more than just the dollars we spend. I've pledged substantial increases in our foreign assistance, which is in Africa's interests and America's interests. But the true sign of success is not whether we are a source of perpetual aid that helps people scrape by; it's whether we are partners in building the capacity for transformational change.

This mutual responsibility must be the foundation of our partnership. And today, I'll focus on four areas that are critical to the future of Africa and the entire developing world: democracy, opportunity, health, and the peaceful resolution of conflict.

First, we must support strong and sustainable democratic governments. As I said in Cairo, each nation gives life to democracy in its own way and in line with its own traditions. But history offers a clear verdict: Governments that respect the will of their own people, that govern by consent, and not coercion, are more prosperous, they are more stable, and more successful than governments that do not.

This is about more than just holding elections; it's also about what happens between elections. Repression can take many forms, and too many nations, even those that have elections, are plagued by problems that condemn their people to poverty. And no country is going to create wealth if its leaders exploit the economy to enrich themselves, or if police can be bought off by drug traffickers. No

business wants to invest in a place where the government skims 20 percent off the top, or the head of the port authority is corrupt. No person wants to live in a society where the rule of law gives way to the rule of brutality and bribery. This—that is not democracy; that is tyranny, even if occasionally you sprinkle an election in there. And now is the time for that style of governance to end.

In the 21st century, capable, reliable, and transparent institutions are the key to success: strong Parliaments, honest police forces, independent judges, an independent press, a vibrant private sector, a civil society. Those are the things that give life to democracy, because that is what matters in people's everyday lives.

Now, time and again, Ghanaians have chosen constitutional rule over autocracy and shown a democratic spirit that allows the energy of your people to break through. We see that in leaders who accept defeat graciously—the fact that President Mills's opponents were standing beside him last night to greet me when I came off the plane spoke volumes about Ghana; victors who resist calls to wield power against the opposition in unfair ways. We see that spirit in courageous journalists like Anas Aremeyaw Anas, who risked his life to report the truth. We see it in police like Patience Quaye, who helped prosecute the first human trafficker in Ghana. We see it in the young people who are speaking up against patronage and participating in the political process.

Across Africa, we've seen countless examples of people taking control of their destiny and making change from the bottom up. We saw it in Kenya, where civil society and business came together to help stop postelection violence. We saw it in South Africa, where over three-quarters of the country voted in the recent election—the fourth since the end of Apartheid. We saw it in Zimbabwe, where the Election Support Network braved brutal repression to stand up for the principle that a person's vote is their sacred right.

Now, make no mistake: History is on the side of these brave Africans, not with those who use coups or change constitutions to stay in power. Africa doesn't need strongmen; it needs strong institutions.

Now, America will not seek to impose any system of government on any other nation. The essential truth of democracy is that each nation determines its own destiny. But what America will do is increase assistance for responsible individuals and responsible institutions, with a focus on supporting good governance: on Parliaments, which check abuses of power and ensure that opposition voices are heard; on the rule of law, which ensures the equal administration of justice; on civic participation, so that young people get involved; and on concrete solutions to corruption, like forensic accounting and automating services, strengthening hotlines, protecting whistleblowers to advance transparency and accountability.

And we provide this support. I have directed my administration to give greater attention to corruption in our human rights reports. People everywhere should have the right to start a business or get an education without paying a bribe. We have a responsibility to support those who act responsibly and to isolate those who don't, and that is exactly what America will do.

Now, this leads directly to our second area of partnership: supporting development that provides opportunity for more people. With better governance, I have no doubt that Africa holds the promise of a broader base of prosperity. Witness the extraordinary success of Africans in my country, America. They're doing very well. So they've got the talent; they've got the entrepreneurial spirit. The question is, how do we make sure that they're succeeding here in their home countries? The continent is rich in natural resources. And from cell phone entrepreneurs to small farmers, Africans have shown the capacity and commitment to create their own opportunities. But old habits must also be broken. Dependence on commodities, or a single export, has a tendency to concentrate wealth in the hands of the few and leaves people too vulnerable to downturns.

So in Ghana, for instance, oil brings great opportunities, and you have been very responsible in preparing for new revenue. But as so many Ghanaians know, oil cannot simply become the new cocoa. From South Korea to Singapore, history shows that countries thrive when they invest in their people and in their infrastructure,

when they promote multiple export industries, develop a skilled workforce, and create space for small and medium-sized businesses that create jobs.

As Africans reach for this promise, America will be more responsible in extending our hand. By cutting costs that go to Western consultants and administration, we want to put more resources in the hands of those who need it, while training people to do more for themselves. And that's why our $3.5 billion food security initiative is focused on new methods and technologies for farmers, not simply sending American producers or goods to Africa. Aid is not an end in itself. The purpose of foreign assistance must be creating the conditions where it's no longer needed. I want to see Ghanaians not only self-sufficient in food, I want to see you exporting food to other countries and earning money. You can do that.

Now, America can also do more to promote trade and investment. Wealthy nations must open our doors to goods and services from Africa in a meaningful way. That will be a commitment of my administration. And where there is good governance, we can broaden prosperity through public-private partnerships that invest in better roads and electricity; capacity-building that trains people to grow a business; financial services that reach not just the cities but also the poor and rural areas. This is also in our own interests, for if people are lifted out of poverty and wealth is created in Africa, guess what? New markets will open up for our own goods. So it's good for both.

Now, one area that holds out both undeniable peril and extraordinary promise is energy. Africa gives off less greenhouse gas than any other part of the world, but it is the most threatened by climate change. A warming planet will spread disease, shrink water resources, and deplete crops, creating conditions that produce more famine and more conflict. All of us—particularly the developed world—have a responsibility to slow these trends through mitigation and by changing the way that we use energy. But we can also work with Africans to turn this crisis into opportunity.

Together, we can partner on behalf of our planet and our prosperity and help countries increase access to power while skipping—leapfrogging the dirtier phase of development. Think about it: Across Africa, there is bountiful wind and solar power, geothermal energy, and biofuels. From the Rift Valley to the north African deserts, from the Western Coasts to South Africa's crops, Africa's boundless natural gifts can generate its own power, while exporting profitable, clean energy abroad.

These steps are about more than growth numbers on a balance sheet. They're about whether a young person with an education can get a job that supports a family; a farmer can transfer their goods to market; an entrepreneur with a good idea can start a business. It's about the dignity of work. It's about the opportunity that must exist for Africans in the 21st century. Now, just as governance is vital to opportunity, it's also critical to the third area I want to talk about: strengthening public health.

In recent years, enormous progress has been made in parts of Africa. Far more people are living productively with HIV/AIDS and getting the drugs they need. I just saw a wonderful clinic and hospital that is focused particularly on maternal health. But too many still die from diseases that shouldn't kill them. When children are being killed because of a mosquito bite, and mothers are dying in childbirth, then we know that more progress must be made.

Yet because of incentives—often provided by donor nations—many African doctors and nurses go overseas, or work for programs that focus on a single disease. And this create gaps in primary care and basic prevention. Meanwhile, individual Africans also have to make responsible choices that prevent the spread of disease, while promoting public health in their communities and countries.

So across Africa, we see examples of people tackling these problems. In Nigeria, an interfaith effort of Christians and Muslims has set an example of cooperation to confront malaria. Here in Ghana and across Africa, we see innovative ideas for filling gaps in care, for

instance, through e-health initiatives that allow doctors in big cities to support those in small towns.

America will support these efforts through a comprehensive, global health strategy, because in the 21st century, we are called to act by our conscience but also by our common interest, because when a child dies of a preventable disease in Accra, that diminishes us everywhere. And when disease goes unchecked in any corner of the world, we know that it can spread across oceans and continents.

And that's why my administration has committed $63 billion to meet these challenges—$63 billion. Building on the strong efforts of President Bush, we will carry forward the fight against HIV/AIDS. We will pursue the goal of ending deaths from malaria and tuberculosis, and we will work to eradicate polio. We will fight neglected tropical disease. And we won't confront illnesses in isolation. We will invest in public health systems that promote wellness and focus on the health of mothers and children.

Now, as we partner on behalf of a healthier future, we must also stop the destruction that comes not from illness, but from human beings. And so the final area that I will address is conflict.

Let me be clear: Africa is not the crude caricature of a continent at perpetual war. But if we are honest, for far too many Africans, conflict is a part of life, as constant as the Sun. There are wars over land and wars over resources. And it is still far too easy for those without conscience to manipulate whole communities into fighting among faiths and tribes.

These conflicts are a millstone around Africa's neck. Now, we all have many identities: of tribe and ethnicity; of religion and nationality. But defining oneself in opposition to someone who belongs to a different tribe or who worships a different prophet has no place in the 21st century. Africa's diversity should be a source of strength, not a cause for division. We are all God's children. We all share common aspirations to live in peace and security, to access education and opportunity, to love our families and our communities and our faith. That is our common humanity.

That is why we must stand up to inhumanity in our midst. It is never justified—never justifiable to target innocents in the name of ideology. It is the death sentence of a society to force children to kill in wars. It is the ultimate mark of criminality and cowardice to condemn women to relentless and systemic rape. We must bear witness to the value of every child in Darfur and the dignity of every woman in the Congo. No faith or culture should condone the outright—outrages against them. And all of us must strive for the peace and security necessary for progress.

Africans are standing up for this future. Here, too, in Ghana we are seeing you help point the way forward. Ghanaians should take pride in your contributions to peacekeeping from Congo to Liberia to Lebanon and your efforts to resist the scourge of the drug trade. We welcome the steps that are being taken by organizations like the African Union and ECOWAS to better resolve conflicts, to keep the peace, and support those in need. And we encourage the vision of a strong, regional security architecture that can bring effective, transnational forces to bear when needed.

America has a responsibility to work with you as a partner to advance this vision, not just with words, but with support that strengthens African capacity. When there's a genocide in Darfur or terrorists in Somalia, these are not simply African problems; they are global security challenges, and they demand a global response.

And that's why we stand ready to partner through diplomacy and technical assistance and logistical support, and we will stand behind efforts to hold war criminals accountable. And let me be clear: Our Africa Command is focused not on establishing a foothold in the continent, but on confronting these common challenges to advance the security of America, Africa, and the world.

Now, in Moscow, I spoke of the need for an international system where the universal rights of human beings are respected and violations of those rights are opposed. And that must include a commitment to support those who resolve conflicts peacefully, to sanction and stop those who don't, and to help those who have suffered. But ultimately, it will be vibrant democracies

like Botswana and Ghana which roll back the causes of conflict and advance the frontiers of peace and prosperity.

As I said earlier, Africa's future is up to Africans. The people of Africa are ready to claim that future. And in my country, African Americans—including so many recent immigrants—have thrived in every sector of society. We've done so despite a difficult past, and we've drawn strength from our African heritage. With strong institutions and a strong will, I know that Africans can live their dreams in Nairobi and Lagos, Kigali, Kinshasa, Harare, and right here in Accra.

You know, 52 years ago, the eyes of the world were on Ghana. And a young preacher named Martin Luther King traveled here to Accra to watch the Union Jack come down and the Ghanaian flag go up. This was before the march on Washington or the success of the civil rights movement in my country. And Dr. King was asked how he felt while watching the birth of a nation, and he said, "It renews my conviction in the ultimate triumph of justice."

Now that triumph must be won once more, and it must be won by you. And I am particularly speaking to the young people all across Africa and right here in Ghana. In places like Ghana, young people make up over half of the population. And here is what you must know: The world will be what you make of it. You have the power to hold your leaders accountable and to build institutions that serve the people. You can serve in your communities and harness your energy and education to create new wealth and build new connections to the world. You can conquer disease and end conflicts and make change from the bottom up. You can do that. Yes you can—[*applause*]—because in this moment, history is on the move.

But these things can only be done if all of you take responsibility for your future. And it won't be easy. It will take time and effort. There will be suffering and setbacks. But I can promise you this: America will be with you every step of the way, as a partner, as a friend. Opportunity won't come from any other place, though. It must come from the decisions that all of you make, the things that you do, the hope that you hold in your heart.

Ghana, freedom is your inheritance. Now it is your responsibility to build upon freedom's foundation. And if you do, we will look back years from now to places like Accra and say, this was the time when the promise was realized; this was the moment when prosperity was forged, when pain was overcome, and a new era of progress began. This can be the time when we witness the triumph of justice once more. Yes we can.

Thank you very much. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:40 p.m. at Accra International Conference Center. In his remarks, he referred to Speaker of Parliament Joyce Adeline Bamford-Addo, President John Evans Atta Mills, Vice President John Dramani Mahama, Chief Justice Georgina Wood, and Deputy Superintendent of Police Patience Quaye of Ghana. The Office of the Press Secretary also released French, Arabic, Portuguese, and Swahili language transcripts of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Tour of Cape Coast Castle in Cape Coast, Ghana
July 11, 2009

Michelle, the children, as well as other members of my family, just got an extraordinary tour of this castle. It is reminiscent of the trip I took to Buchenwald, because it reminds us of the capacity of human beings to commit great evil. One of the most striking things that I heard was that right above the dungeons in which male captives were kept was a church, and that reminds us that sometimes we can tolerate and stand by great evil even as we think that we're doing good.

You know, I think it was particularly important for Malia and Sasha, who are growing up in such a blessed way, to be reminded that history can take very cruel turns, and hopefully, one of the things that was imparted to them

during this trip is their sense of obligation to fight oppression and cruelty wherever it appears, and that any group of people who are degrading another group of people have to be fought against with whatever tools we have available to us.

So obviously, it's a moving experience, a moving moment. We want to thank those who arranged for the tour and the people of Ghana for preserving this history. As painful as it is, I think that it helps to teach all of us that we have to do what we can to fight against the kinds of evils that, sadly, still exist in our world, not just on this continent but in every corner of the globe.

And I think, as Americans and as African Americans, obviously, there's a special sense that on the one hand this place was a place of profound sadness; on the other hand, it is here where the journey of much of the African American experience began. And symbolically, to be able to come back with my family, with Michelle and our children, and see the portal through which the diaspora began, but also to be able to come back here in celebration with the people of Ghana of the extraordinary progress that we've made because of the courage of so many, Black and White, to abolish slavery and ultimately win civil rights for all people, I think, is a source of hope. It reminds us that as bad as history can be, it's also possible to overcome.

Thanks, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:57 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to Departure from Accra, Ghana
July 11, 2009

Hello, Ghana. Thank you. Thank you. I want to thank the people of Ghana for this extraordinary visit. Michelle and I have been greatly honored to be joined by President Mills and his lovely wife. They have been gracious hosts.

You know, your President and I have a lot in common. We're both lawyers; we're both former law professors; we're both new Presidents. We both like to think of ourselves as athletes. The difference is President Mills played hockey on the national team of Ghana, and I played basketball mostly in my backyard. [*Laughter*] But we both love sports.

We're both proud of serving our countries. And today I want to honor President Mills for his strong and thoughtful leadership, his devotion to democracy, and his commitment for the future of this nation.

Now, I also want to thank the magnificent welcoming committee, including the drummers and the dancers. Michelle and I and our daughters enjoyed it very much.

I want to recognize our Peace Corps volunteers who are here. You know, Ghana was the very first nation to host young people from the Peace Corps. And for decades, our two nations have formed vital partnerships and lasting friendships because of this program. So all of you in the Peace Corps, you are doing an outstanding job, and we're proud of you.

As somebody whose father comes from Africa, obviously, this visit has been particularly meaningful for me. I've had a chance to discuss the future of Ghana but also the future of Africa with President Mills. I've spoken to the Parliament here in Ghana about America's commitment to supporting democracy and development. Michelle and I visited La General Hospital, where we met with beautiful women and their children who are getting the care that they need for a healthy start.

And finally, we toured Cape Coast Castle, a place for centuries where men, women, and children of this nation and surrounding areas were sold into slavery. I'll never forget the image of my two young daughters, the descendants of Africans and African Americans, walking through those doors of no return, but then walking back those doors of return. It was a remarkable reminder that while the future is unknowable, the winds always blow in the direction of human progress.

At each point of our visit here, I was reminded of the enduring bond between our nations.

The men and women taken from this nation helped to build my own. And today, many of our leading citizens trace their roots to these shores. Your first President attended a university in the United States, as did your current one. Great civil rights leaders of America, like Dr. Martin Luther King, looked to the independence movement here in Ghana and asked themselves, "If Africans can live freely in Africa, why can't African Americans live freely in America?"

And immigrants from Ghana and from all across Africa have thrived all across America. Today, both our nations are diverse and vibrant democracies. Here in Ghana, many different ethnic groups speak many languages, but have found a way to live and work together in peace. People here can speak freely and worship freely. You have a robust civil society, fair elections, and a free press, a growing market economy, and a sense of energy and optimism. And every day with its success, Ghana sends a simple message to the world that democracy can thrive in Africa.

So we in America are proud of our partnership with Ghana. Together, we've worked to advance education and fight poverty. We've made real and measurable strides in fighting diseases from malaria to tuberculosis to polio and neglected tropical diseases. This is a partnership we intend to continue. It's a partnership based not just on shared interests, but on shared ideals, ideals forged in struggles for independence that have made our countries who they are.

We believe that democracy is not simply a gift from previous generations, but a responsibility for each generation to preserve and to pass on. We believe that no one, whether it's through the influence of politics, the power of money, or the fear of force is above the law. And we believe that we're all equal, all endowed with basic human dignity, all entitled to basic human rights.

It is up to each of us, every one of us, to uphold those ideals. This is true not just in Ghana but for all of Africa. America wants to partner with the people and nations of Africa, but we all know that the future of Africa is in the hands of Africa.

So I especially want to, again, speak to the young people of Africa. In places like Ghana, you make up more than half the population, and here is what you must know, that the world is what you make of it. You have the power to hold your leaders accountable and to build institutions that serve the people. You can serve in communities like these Peace Corps workers and harness your energy and education to renew and build connections between the world. You can conquer disease and end conflict and make change from the bottom up. You can do all that.

And I promise you this: If you seize this opportunity, if you take responsibility for your future, America will be with you every step of the way as a partner and as a friend. Freedom is your inheritance, hard won 52 years ago by men and women determined to cast off the title of subjects for the title of citizens and claim for themselves and their children the liberties that are all of our birthrights.

Dr. King came here to Ghana to witness the culmination of that struggle. He watched as the Union Jack was lowered and the Ghanaian flag was raised at the Parliament. He marveled at the site of the Duchess of Kent dancing with the new Ghanaian President at the state ball. And in a sermon he gave upon returning home to America, he said of this new nation, "There is a great day ahead. The future is on its side." Those words ring just as true today as they did more than half a century ago.

Great days lie ahead for this nation. The future is on Ghana's side. I promise that America will be with you. And together we will create a better world.

Thank you, Ghana. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:24 p.m. at Kotoka International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to President John Evans Atta Mills of Ghana and his wife Naadu. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Mills.

Remarks on the Nomination of Regina M. Benjamin To Be Surgeon General and an Exchange With Reporters

July 13, 2009

The President. Good morning, everybody. Before I introduce America's next Surgeon General, I'd like to say a few words about our ongoing efforts to reform the health care system that she will help oversee.

We are now closer to the goal of health care reform than we have ever been. Over the last several weeks, key committees in the House and the Senate have made important and unprecedented progress on a plan that will lower costs, provide better care for patients, and curb the worst practices of the insurance companies. It's a plan that will not add to our deficit over the next decade. Let me repeat that: It is a plan that will not add to our deficit over the next decade and eventually will help lower our deficit by slowing the skyrocketing costs of Medicare and Medicaid.

Now, even though we are close, I've got no illusions that it's going to be easy to get over the finish line. There are going to be more debates and more disagreements before all is said and done. But health care reform must be done.

I know there are those who believe we should wait to solve this problem, or take a more incremental approach, or simply do nothing. But this is the kind of criticism we heard when the country tried to pass Medicare, a program that is now providing quality care to generations of American seniors. It's the kind of criticism we heard when we tried to pass the Children's Health Insurance Program, which has provided quality care and coverage to millions of kids. It's the same Washington thinking that has ignored big challenges and put off tough decisions for decades. And it is precisely that kind of small thinking that has led us into the current predicament.

So make no mistake: The status quo on health care is no longer an option for the United States of America. If we step back from this challenge right now, we will leave our children a legacy of debt, a future of crushing costs that bankrupt our families, our businesses, and because we will have done nothing to bring down the costs of Medicare and Medicaid, will crush our Government. Premiums will continue to skyrocket, placing what amounts to another tax on American families struggling to pay bills. The insurance companies and special interests that have killed reform in the past will only continue to benefit even more, and they'll continue to deny coverage to Americans with preexisting medical conditions. People will continue to lose health insurance just because they lose their job or they change jobs.

This is a future that we cannot afford. This country can't afford to have health care premiums rise three times faster than people's wages, as they did over the last decade. We can't afford 14,000 Americans losing their health care every single day. We can't afford a future where our Government will eventually spend more on Medicare and Medicaid than what we spend on everything else.

And during the campaign, I promised health care reform that would control costs, expand coverage, and ensure choice. And I promised that Americans making $250,000 a year or less would not pay more in taxes. These are promises that we're keeping as reform moves forward.

This is no longer a problem we can wait to fix; this is about who we are as a country. Health care reform is about every family's health, but it's also about the health of the economy. So I just want to put everybody on notice, because there was a lot of chatter during the week that I was gone: We are going to get this done; inaction is not an option. And for those naysayers and cynics who think that this is not going to happen, don't bet against us. We are going to make this thing happen because the American people desperately need it.

And even those who are satisfied with their health care right now, they understand that if premiums keep on doubling and if employers keep on shedding health insurance because it's unsustainable and if you look at the trajectory of where Medicare and Medicaid are going, then inaction will create the biggest crisis of all.

And so I understand people are a little nervous and a little scared about making change.

The muscles in this town to bring about big changes are a little atrophied, but we're whipping folks back into shape. We are going to get this done. And if there's anyone who understands the urgency of meeting this challenge in a personal and powerful way, it's the woman who will become our Nation's next Surgeon General, Dr. Regina Benjamin.

Now, the list of qualifications that make Dr. Benjamin an outstanding candidate to be America's leading spokesperson on issues of public health are long indeed. She was in the second class at Morehouse School of Medicine and went on to earn an M.D. from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and an MBA from Tulane. She served as Associate Dean for Rural Health at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine. And in 1995, she became the first physician under 40 and the first African American woman to be named to the American Medical Association's Board of Trustees. In 2002, she became president of Alabama's State Medical Association. And she has received numerous awards and recognitions, including the MacArthur Genius Award. It's very impressive. [*Laughter*]

But of all these achievements and experience, none has been more pertinent to today's challenges or closer to Regina's heart than the rural health clinic that she has built and rebuilt in Bayou La Batre—did I say that right?

Surgeon General-Designate Benjamin. Close.

The President. Well, tell me how to say it.

Surgeon General-Designate Benjamin. Bayou La Batre.

The President. Bayou La Batre. That's in Alabama, people. [*Laughter*]

Bayou La Batre is a rural town of about 2,500 people. It's a shrimping town, where a lot of folks work for themselves, scrape by, and can't usually afford health insurance. And by the way, Dr. Benjamin, while we were talking in the Oval Office, described for me the demographics of this town are actually very interesting, because you've got Whites, Blacks, and Asians in this community. There are a lot of Laotians and Cambodians who have moved there and are part of this shrimping town, so it's a diverse but very poor rural community. And like so many other rural communities, doctors and hospitals are hard to come by. And that's why, even though she could have left the State to make more money as a specialist or as a doctor in a wealthier community, Regina Benjamin returned to Alabama and opened a small clinic in Bayou La Batre.

When people couldn't pay, she didn't charge them. When the clinic wasn't making money, she didn't take a salary for herself. When Hurricane Georges destroyed the clinic in 1998, she made house calls to all her patients while it was rebuilt. When Hurricane Katrina destroyed it again and left most of her town homeless, she mortgaged her house and maxed out her credit cards to rebuild that clinic for a second time. She tended to those who had been wounded in the storm, and when folks needed medicine, she asked the pharmacist to send the bill her way.

And when Regina's clinic was about to open for the third time a—and a fire burned it to the ground before it could serve the first patient, well, you can guess what Dr. Benjamin did. With help from her community, she is rebuilding it again. One disabled patient brought her an envelope with $20 inside. Another elderly man said simply, "Maybe I can help. I got a hammer."

For nearly two decades, Dr. Regina Benjamin has seen in a very personal way what is broken about our health care system. She's seen an increasing number of patients who've had health insurance their entire lives suddenly lose it because they lost their jobs or because it's simply become too expensive. She's been a relentless promoter of prevention and wellness programs, having treated too many costly and—diseases and complications that didn't have to happen. And she's witnessed the shortage of primary care physicians in the rural and underserved areas where she works.

But for all that she's seen and all the tremendous obstacles that she has overcome, Regina Benjamin also represents what's best about health care in America: doctors and nurses who give and care and sacrifice for the sake of their patients; those Americans who would do anything to heal a fellow citizen. Through floods and fires and severe want, Regina Benjamin has refused to give up; her

patients have refused to give up. And when we were talking in the Oval Office, she said: "The one thing I want to do is make sure that this Surgeon General's Office gives voice to patients, that patients have a seat at the table; somebody is advocating for them and speaking for them."

And now we in Washington and across America have to refuse to give up on the goal of health care that is affordable and accessible for every one—last one of us. We don't have to deal with hurricanes, and we don't have to deal with floods, and we don't have to deal with fires. All we have to do is pass a bill to make sure that the American people have a decent shot at getting the kind of choice and high-quality health care that's affordable.

And I know that Dr. Benjamin is going to help us get there as the next Surgeon General. And I am truly honored to nominate her for that post, and Secretary Sebelius is equally excited, even though she's just standing here. [*Laughter*]

With that, let me introduce the next Surgeon General of the United States, Dr. Regina Benjamin.

[*At this point, Surgeon General-designate Benjamin made brief remarks, concluding as follows*.]

Surgeon General-Designate Benjamin. So thank you, Mr. President, for having the confidence in me. And if confirmed, I promise I will give you and the American people my best.

Thank you.

Health Care Reform

Q. Mr. President, are you going to get more involved in health care? The Senators say you ought to.

The President. That was a good one, Bill [Bill Plante, CBS News]. [*Laughter*] We're going to get this done.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:51 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Surgeon General-designate Benjamin.

Remarks Honoring the 2008 Major League Soccer Champion Columbus Crew
July 13, 2009

Hello, everybody. Please have a seat. Well, welcome to the White House, and congratulations to the Columbus Crew on winning your first MLS Cup. Give them a big round of applause.

There are a couple people who are big fans, and so—they also happen to be Members of Congress. I want to acknowledge them: Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio, Representative Steve Driehaus, and Representative Mary Jo Kilroy. Please give them a big round of applause. And the Olives soccer team is here—is that this crew right here? I suspected as much. They've been working with the Crew; they're all from the Columbus area. So welcome to the Rose Garden.

And congratulations to all the rowdy fans who were with you guys every step of the way. I hear that the Crew stadium was one of the toughest places to play for visiting teams, although I think you saw, playing the Chicago Fire, that we've got a little—[*laughter*]—you know, we've got some pretty good fans in Chicago as well.

I want to thank Clark Hunt and all the members of the Hunt family for being here today. The Hunt family's legacy and dedication to American professional sports—and to soccer in particular—has been critical to the success of this team but also to the success of the league.

I want to congratulate Coach Warzychi—Warzycha—and you know, it's like Barack Obama, you know, you screw it up occasionally. And I also want to congratulate Coach Schmid. Under your leadership, this team made an incredible turnaround from a losing season in 2007 to the best record in MLS in 2008. And congratulations, Sigi, on being chosen MLS Coach of the Year.

Now, I should admit up front that I don't get a chance to see a lot of professional sports

teams these days. Most of the soccer I've seen recently has been at my daughters' games. And I've learned that there are two important rules at that age—I'm sure some of you may remember this. The first is, no matter what position you play, just run straight to the ball and congregate around it. [*Laughter*] And the second rule is, don't forget the snacks at halftime. [*Laughter*]

But I see that my daughters love playing this game of soccer, and we know that this is an exciting time for soccer in America. We just watched Team USA shock the world at the Confederation Cup, and we're in the middle of another impressive run in the Gold Cup.

As some of you may know, I just got back from the G–8 meeting in Italy, and one of the leaders there was President Lula da Silva of Brazil. He gave me a hard time about Team USA dropping a 2-0 lead in the Confederations Cup final, but I reminded him that we held our own against the best teams in the world, we shocked a lot of people, and we might just see that team in the World Cup next year. So it's clear that soccer in America is on the rise, and MLS is a big part of that.

I want to congratulate Chad Marshall on being named Defender of the Year; Guillermo Barros Schelotto for winning the MVP award and assisting in all three goals in the championship game.

And finally, I want to salute these guys for donating so much time and energy to the Columbus community, and we thank them for participating in our United We Serve summer of service. Just last week, the Crew spent time with young people in Columbus cleaning up some of the low-income neighborhoods near Crew Stadium, which strengthens their community and reaches out to folks who need it most.

That kind of spirit of service is what this White House wants to encourage in all citizens, but seeing it from professional athletes is especially gratifying. And so we appreciate also the clinic that the Crew is going to put on for young people here in DC today, which teaches them not just skills but also how to live healthy and active lives.

And thanks to that example—an example set by the Crew and by players across MLS and women's professional soccer as well—I'm confident that American soccer will remain something to be excited about for years to come.

So congratulations again for the incredible championship season and good luck next year. And I have to say that that's a big trophy—so give them a big round of applause, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:31 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Reps. Steven L. Driehaus and Mary Jo Kilroy; and Clark Hunt, Jr., owner, Robert Warzycha, head coach, Sigi Schmid, former head coach, Chad Marshall, defender, and Guillermo Barros Schelotto, forward/midfielder, Columbus Crew.

Remarks in a Discussion on Urban and Metropolitan Policy
July 13, 2009

The President. All right. Well, hello, everybody. A couple of quick acknowledgments: Where's Greg—where's Greg Nickels? Thank you. There you are, Greg. Thank you so much for your participation today. I understand Governor Rendell is here, or was here. He may have stepped out, but when he comes back in, I hope to have a chance to say hello to him. Burrell Ellis, CEO of DeKalb County—it's so nice to see you, Burrell; Kathie Novak—where's Kathie? Hey, Kathie, good to see you; Henry Cisneros—where are you? The legendary—[*laughter*]—good to see you, my friend; Federico Pena, thank you so much—who worked so hard to help us get elected; Julia Stasch—where's my friend from Chicago? There she is. Good to see you, Julia. And obviously, you know our outstanding Cabinet that is so focused on these issues: Ray LaHood; Shaun Donovan; Lisa Jackson. Where's—Ms. Mills, there; great to see Karen, and Hilda Solis.

I just want you to know, as well as our new Director of our office of—I always forget the full name of this thing; I call it the drug czar, but—[*laughter*].

National Drug Control Policy Director R. Gil Kerlikowske. I'm fine with that. [*Laughter*]

The President. Okay, Gil. By the way, Nickels vouched for you. [*Laughter*]

Thank you so much, all of you, for participating. I see a lot of friends, old and new. And it's great to be back, and it's great to be joined by some of the finest urban thinkers in America for what I understand has been a critical conversation on the future of America's urban and metropolitan areas.

Now, as you might imagine, this is a subject that's near and dear to my heart. I've lived almost all my life in urban areas. Michelle and I chose to raise our daughters in the city where she grew up. And even though I went to college in LA and New York, and law school across the river from Boston, I received my greatest education on Chicago's south side, working at the local level to bring about change in those communities and opportunities to people's lives.

And I see a number of Chicago folks who were fighting with me—I mean, alongside me—[*laughter*]—for many years. I already mentioned Julia, but obviously, there are a number of other folks as well.

And that experience also gave me an understanding of some of the challenges facing city halls all across the country. And I know that those challenges are particularly severe today because of this recession. Four in five cities have had to cut services, just when folks need it the most, and 48 States face the prospects of budget deficits in the coming fiscal year.

And that's one reason why we took swift and aggressive action in the first months of my administration to pull our economy——

[*At this point, the teleprompter screen fell.*]

——oh, goodness, sorry about that, guys—[*laughter*]—to pull our economy back from the brink, including the largest and most sweeping economic recovery plan in our Nation's history. If we had not taken that step, our cities would be in a even deeper hole, and State budget deficits would be nearly twice as large as they are right now, and tens of thousands of police officers and firefighters and teachers would be out of a job as we speak. And I think that all of you are aware of that.

But what's also clear is we're going to need to do more than just help our cities weather the current economic storm. We've got to figure out ways to rebuild them on a newer, firmer, stronger foundation for our future. And that requires new strategies for our cities and metropolitan areas that focus on advancing opportunity through competitive, sustainable, and inclusive growth. And that's why all of you are here today. And I know that there were a lot of ideas that were shared throughout the morning and afternoon.

Now, the first thing we need to recognize is that this is not just a time of challenge for America's cities; it's also a time of great change. Even as we've seen many of our central cities continuing to grow in recent years, we've seen their suburbs and exurbs grow roughly twice as fast—that spreads homes and jobs and businesses to a broader geographic area. And this transformation is creating new pressures and problems, of course, but it's also opening up new opportunities, because it's not just our cities that are hotbeds of innovation anymore; it's our growing metropolitan areas.

And when I spoke to the U.S. Conference of Mayors last year, I tried to hone in on this point that what, I think, traditionally had been seen as this divide between city and suburb, that in some ways you've seen both city and suburb now come together and recognize they can't solve their problems in isolation, they've got to paying attention to each other. And these metropolitan areas, they're home to 85 percent of our jobs and 90 percent of our economic output.

Now, that doesn't mean investing in America comes at the expense of rural America, quite the opposite. Investing in mass transit and high-speed rail, for example, doesn't just make our downtowns more livable; it helps our regional economies grow. Investing in renewable energy doesn't just make our cities cleaner; it boosts rural areas that harness that energy. Our urban and rural communities are not independent, they are interdependent.

So what's needed now is a new, imaginative, bold vision tailored to this reality that brings opportunity to every corner of our growing metropolitan areas, a new strategy that's about southern Florida as much as Miami; that's about Mesa and Scottsdale as much as it's about Phoenix; that's about Aurora and Boulder and Northglenn as much as about Denver.

An early step was to appoint Adolfo Carrion as our first White House Director of Urban Affairs. And his team and he share my belief that our cities need more than just a partner; they need a partner who knows that the old ways of looking at our cities just won't do. And that's why I've directed the Office of Management and Budget, the Domestic Policy Council, the National Economic Council, and the Office of Urban Affairs to conduct the first comprehensive interagency review in 30 years of how the Federal Government approaches and funds urban and metropolitan areas so that we can start having a concentrated, focused, strategic approach to Federal efforts to revitalize our metropolitan areas.

And we're also going to take a hard look at how Washington helps or hinders our cities and metro areas, from infrastructure to transportation, from housing to energy, from sustainable development to education. And we're going to make sure Federal policies aren't hostile to good ideas or best practices on the local levels. We're going to put an end to throwing money at what doesn't work, and we're going to start investing in what does work and make sure that we're encouraging that.

Now, we began to do just that with my budget proposal, which included two investments in innovative and proven strategies. I just want to mention these briefly. Now, the first, Promise Neighborhoods, is modeled on Geoffrey Canada's successful Harlem Children's Zone. It's an all-encompassing, all-hands-on-deck effort that's turning around the lives of New York City's children, block by block. And we—what we want to do is to make grants available for communities in other cities to jump-start their own neighborhood-level interventions that change the odds for our kids.

The second proposal we call Choice Neighborhoods, focuses on new ideas for housing in our cities by recognizing that different communities need different solutions. So instead of isolated and monolithic public housing projects that too often trap residents in a cycle of poverty and isolate them further, we want to invest in proven strategies that actually transform communities and enhance opportunity for residents and businesses alike.

But we also need to fundamentally change the way we look at metropolitan development. For too long, Federal policy has actually encouraged sprawl and congestion and pollution, rather than quality public transportation and smart, sustainable development. And we've been keeping communities isolated when we should have been bringing them together.

And that's why we've created a new interagency partnership on sustainable communities, led by Shaun Donovan, as well as Ray LaHood and Lisa Jackson. And by working together, their agencies can make sure that when it comes to development—housing, transportation, energy efficiency—these things aren't mutually exclusive, they go hand in hand. And that means making sure that affordable housing exists in close proximity to jobs and transportation. That means encouraging shorter travel times and lower travel costs. It means safer, greener, more livable communities.

So we're off to a good start. But the truth is, is that Washington can't solve all of these problems that face our cities, and frankly, I know that cities don't expect Washington to solve all these problems. Instead of waiting for Washington, a lot of cities have already gone ahead and become their own laboratories for change and innovation, some leading the world in coming up with new ways to solve the problems of our time.

So you take an example like Denver. Their metropolitan area is projected to grow by 1 million residents over the next 15 years or so. But rather than wait for a congestion crisis, they're already at work on plans to build and operate a public transit system up to the challenge, and to surround that system with smart new housing, retail, and office development near each stop.

Philadelphia is an example of what's been called "urban agriculture." It may sound like an oxymoron, but one proposal is trying to make a situation where fresh, local food supplies are within a short walk for most city residents, which will have a direct impact not only on the economy and on the environment but also make an immeasurable difference in the health of Americans.

Or Kansas City, one idea there focuses on transforming a low-income community into a national model of sustainability by weatherizing homes and building a green local transit system.

So three different cities with three unique ideas for the future, and that's why they're three of the cities that are members of my—that the members of my Cabinet and Office of Urban Affairs will visit this summer as part of a ongoing national conversation to lift up best practices from around the country, to look at innovations for the metropolitan areas of tomorrow. And forward-looking cities shouldn't be succeeding despite Washington; they should be succeeding with a hand from Washington. We want to hear directly from them, and we want to hear directly from all of you, on fresh ideas and successful solutions that you've devised, and then figure out what the Federal Government can do or shouldn't do to help reinvent cities and metropolitan areas for the 21st century.

So I know that this change is possible. After all, I'm from a city that knows a little something about reinventing itself. In the 19th century, after a cataclysmic fire, Chicagoans rebuilt stronger than before. In the last century, they led the world upward in steel and glass. And in this century, under my friend Mayor Daley's leadership, they're helping to lead the world forward in newer, greener, more livable ways.

Daniel Burnham said, "Make no little plans." And that's the spirit behind his bold and ambitious designs unveiled 100 years ago this month that helped transform Chicago into a world-class city. That's the same spirit with which we have to approach the reinvention of all of America's cities and metropolitan areas, a vision of vibrant, sustainable places that provide our children with every chance to learn and to grow, and that allow our businesses and workers the best opportunity to innovate and succeed, and that let our older Americans live out their best years in the midst of all that metropolitan life can offer. Now is the time to seize that moment of possibility, and I am absolutely confident that, starting today with this conversation, you and I together, we're going to be able to make this happen.

So thank you for joining us, and I'm looking forward to all of us getting to work. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:10 p.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Gregory J. Nickels of Seattle, WA; Gov. Edward G. Rendell of Pennsylvania; Mayor Kathleen M. Novak of Northglenn, CO; former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Henry G. Cisneros; former Secretary of Energy Federico Pena; Julia M. Stasch, vice president, Human and Community Development, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; Secretary of Transportation Raymond H. LaHood; Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Shaun L.S. Donovan; Lisa P. Jackson, Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency; Karen G. Mills, Administrator, Small Business Administration; Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis; Adolfo Carrion, Jr., Director, White House Office of Urban Affairs; Geoffrey Canada, president and chief executive officer, Harlem Children's Zone; and Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago, IL.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende of the Netherlands and an Exchange With Reporters
July 14, 2009

President Obama. Well, let me just make a very brief statement. I am very pleased to have Prime Minister Balkenende here and his delegation. We are about to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson, on behalf of a Dutch company, exploring Manhattan and

helping to lay the groundwork for the United States. And that's going to be an incredible celebration that we're all looking forward to.

With that history in mind, the United States and the Netherlands have maintained an extraordinarily close friendship for many years now. I wanted to express to the Prime Minister both the American people's appreciation for that friendship generally, but also our admiration for some of the specific international obligations that the Netherlands has taken on and the leadership that it's taken on.

We discussed the critical role that the Netherlands has played in Afghanistan as part of the ISAF operation there. The Dutch military has been one of the most outstanding militaries there, has shown extraordinary not only military capacity but also insight into the local culture and the local politics. The review that we conducted in Afghanistan that emphasized the 3 Ds of development, diplomacy, as well our ability to deploy troops effectively, that really was adopted from some strategies that had already been pursued effectively by the Netherlands.

We discussed a range of international issues that we have been working together on in the G–20. And I extended my personal invitation to the Prime Minister to participate in the next G–20 summit in Pittsburgh, because we think that the Netherlands not only is one of the world's largest economies and most active internationally, but the Prime Minister has very specific expertise and experience in working with a whole range of world leaders, and I think his contribution will be greatly appreciated.

We discussed the issue of Guantanamo and the importance of European countries working with us to assist in that process. And we're grateful for the encouragement that we've received there.

And we discussed the issue of climate change. Obviously, the Netherlands has a lot of experience in dealing with the battle against rising oceans, and they've got a deep investment in dealing with this issue. They've also taken terrific strides on issues of clean energy, and we think that we can get some good advice there, in terms of how we can work together.

So overall, we think that this partnership is strong and will continue to grow. We're grateful to the Dutch people for their extraordinary contributions to international peace and security. And I look forward to seeing you in Pittsburgh.

Prime Minister Balkenende. Thank you very much. Mr. President, I want to thank you very much for receiving us, the delegation and me here in the Oval Office. We've had a good meeting, and you already referred to the fact that we are friends for centuries, the United States and the Netherlands, some 400 years ago when Henry Hudson arrived in the area of New York, Manhattan.

And it's good to underline that we share the same values. We talk about freedom and human rights. We talk about our common responsibilities. We talk about democracy. And we both are acting worldwide.

When you started as President, you brought the message of hope and hope for a new future, and we admire you for that. I want to thank you that you are taking up your responsibilities, domestically but also internationally. We met with each other four times, at several summits, and you played an important role talking about the issues of today.

And we both are convinced that it's important that we are talking about not only the financial crisis but also about the Millennium Development Goals, about the issue of energy, climate change. So the Copenhagen summit must be successful. And therefore, it's important that we'll have a very successful meeting in Pittsburgh. And I want to thank you very much for the invitation to be there. I'm convinced that we can only solve the problems worldwide when we are working together.

And we also spoke about the issue of public health and the health system. In my country, we've had a lot of discussions, and now I know it's now on the agenda here in the United States, so it's an enormous responsibility to change things.

We also talked about the important issue of innovation and several fields of importance that we can do things in another way, innovation in the economic sphere, but also in health issues. We talked about the role of the private

sector, the issue of corporate social responsibility.

So I'm convinced we have so many things in common, we can work together. You already mentioned our work in Afghanistan, a complicated and dangerous area, but we are convinced that it's important to work there together.

Mr. President, I wish you all the best with your responsibilities. It's not an easy time to be President, but you show the power and the courage to change things. And I want to thank you very much for the friendship, and I'm sure, I'm convinced, that we will work together in the right way, in the interest of the people worldwide, in the United States and in the Netherlands. And of course, you're most welcome to my beautiful country.

President Obama. Okay. Thank you very much.

All right, we're going to take one question each; representing the United States, Sam Youngman of the Hill.

Unemployment Statistics/Major League Baseball All-Star Game

Q. Good morning, Mr. President. I'm curious, sir, you've said you expect unemployment to reach 10 percent in the next month or so. How high do you expect it to get in States like Michigan, where it's already 14 percent?

And if I may, sir, I'm curious if you've been practicing your pitching ahead of tonight's game? [*Laughter*]

President Obama. Well, I think it's fair to say that I wanted to loosen up my arm a little bit. You know, my general strategy the last time I threw a pitch was at the American League Championship Series, and I just wanted to keep it high. Now, there was no clock on it; I don't know how fast it went, but if it exceeded 30 miles per hour, I'd be surprised. [*Laughter*] But it did clear the plate.

With respect to the employment issue, obviously, I don't have a crystal ball. We have looked at a lot of the economic data that's coming out right now. And as I've said repeatedly, we have seen some stabilization in the financial markets, and that's good, because that means that companies can borrow and banks are starting to lend again. Small businesses that might have worried just a couple of months ago about closing doors, they are now able to get a little more financing. That means they're less likely to lay off workers. So that's on the positive side.

What we have also seen is that historically, even after you start moving into a recovery, positive growth, hiring typically lags for some time after that. That's been the historic norm. Now, this has been a more severe recession than we've seen since the Great Depression, so how employment numbers are going to respond is not yet clear. My expectation is, is that we will probably continue to see unemployment tick up for several months. And the challenge for this administration is to make sure that even as we are stabilizing the financial system, we understand that the most important thing in the economy is, are people able to find good jobs that pay good wages.

We had a problem even before this recession, even during periods of economic growth, where the pace of job growth, wage growth, income growth was not moving as quickly as overall economic growth. The last recession that we had, the recovery was termed a "jobless recovery." We can't repeat that approach.

And that's why when I talk about things like health care reform or revamping how we approach energy and investing deeply in clean energy, when I talk about improving our education system, as I'll discuss today when I go to Michigan, those foundations are so critical because we've got to find new models of economic growth, particularly at a time when consumers are just not going—probably going to be spending as much as they were, and that has been driving a lot of the economic growth over the last several months.

Michigan, obviously, is a State that has just been battered, not only during this recession but in the years leading up to this recession. We're pleased to see that GM now and Chrysler have gotten out of bankruptcy. They have an opportunity to compete internationally. Had it not been for the steps that we took with respect to GM and Chrysler, the situation in Michigan, I think it's fair to say, would be far worse.

The same applies to the Recovery Act. We've made investments that early on have allowed a State like Michigan to lay off fewer teachers,

fewer cops, fewer firefighters. Those are all jobs that would have been lost in the absence of the recovery package.

But it's still not enough, and so I would argue that the single biggest challenge that not just the United States face, but countries in Europe and all around the world are going to face as we come out of the recovery, is how do we generate enough jobs that pay good wages to keep up with population growth.

And unless we are investing in energy, infrastructure, innovation, science, development, and eliminating the drag that the health care system is placing on the overall economy, I think we will have a very difficult time generating the jobs that are necessary. If we make those investments, then I have confidence that we'll be able to do so. Okay?

Prime Minister Balkenende. [*Inaudible*]

Dutch Role in Afghanistan

Q. Mr. Obama, you mentioned the critical role that the Dutch are playing in Afghanistan. How important is it, do you think, that you will keep playing this role, even after summer next year?

President Obama. Well, as I said, I think Dutch troops have been some of the most effective troops in ISAF. I recognize that participation in the coalition in Afghanistan can be controversial in the Netherlands. It's never easy sending our finest young men and women into a field of battle.

What I shared with the Prime Minister was the hope that even after next summer that there's the ability for the Dutch to continue to apply the leadership and the experience that they've been able to accumulate over these past years.

And I think that all of us want to see an effective exit strategy where increasingly the Afghan Army, Afghan police, Afghan courts, Afghan Government are taking more responsibility for their own security. And if we can get through a successful election in September and we continue to apply the training approach to the Afghan security forces and we combine that with a much more effective approach to economic development inside Afghanistan, then my hope is, is that we will be able to begin transitioning into a different phase in Afghanistan.

The one thing I want to emphasize is that the issue in Afghanistan is not simply an American issue; it is a worldwide issue. And the vulnerabilities to terrorist attack in Europe are at least as high as they are here in the United States. If you look at how Al Qaida has operated, they consider the West to be one undifferentiated set of countries, and they will exploit whatever weaknesses are there.

So I think we have a common interest in dealing with this as effectively as possible. I'm grateful to the Prime Minister and the Dutch people for their extraordinary contribution.

Prime Minister Balkenende. It's good to underline that we are following the three D approach; it's always combination of defense, diplomacy, and development. We have experience on that. I'm very happy with the review of the American administration, because we can say we are exactly on the same line, so we have to go on with that.

Talking about Uruzgan—and you're aware of our decision—we will stop as lead nation in that Province, but it's also good to underline that the Netherlands will not turn its back on the Afghan people. We feel also responsibility. We will go on with—[*inaudible*]—cooperation. If there are requests, we will consider that seriously. That's also the way we have talken about this issue.

I also would like to underline what you said about economic issues. Last year, we talked about financial issues, the financial crisis. We talked about financial architecture. It's important that we are developing the same strategy, and I think that we have ideas enough, but now is the question of the implementation. We are working on that, and therefore, also, the summit in Pittsburgh is extremely important.

But after the financial crisis, it's also a matter of generating jobs. What do we do after the economic crisis? And therefore, also, we need to take coordinated approach.

And that's also linked to the issue of confidence: confidence among consumers, confidence among producers. And that's where it's important that we are working together and

that we find the right certainty, just to give hope for people, because if people are losing their jobs, it's a terrible situation, and we are aware of the fact that we have to change things. And I think that's also your message, that's my message, and that will also be the message of the G–20 meeting in Pittsburgh.

President Obama. Absolutely. Okay, thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:43 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks at Macomb Community College in Warren, Michigan
July 14, 2009

Hello, Michigan! Thank you. Thank you so much. First of all, give Joe a big round of applause for the wonderful introduction. We've got some special guests here. Now, if everybody has chairs, go ahead and use them. [*Laughter*] Feel free. We've got some special guests here today that I just want to acknowledge. All of you are special, but these folks I want to make sure that you have a chance to see them.

First of all, one of the best Governors in the country, please give Jennifer Granholm a big round of applause. Lieutenant Governor John Cherry, give John a big round of applause. One of my favorite people, a former colleague of mine, still just a fighter on behalf of working families each and every day, Senator Debbie Stabenow. We've got speaker of the house Andy Dillon in the house. We've got a lot of other local elected officials, and I just want to thank them.

A couple of people who are missing: Carl Levin, who is doing great work. He's in the Senate right now fighting on behalf of a bill to make sure that we're not loading up a bunch of necessary defense spending with unnecessary defense spending. So he's the point person on it. The only reason he's not here is because he is working alongside the administration to get this bill done. Please give him a big round of applause. Congressman Sandy Levin, also working hard on your behalf each and every day, but is not here today. I want to go ahead and acknowledge the new mayor, since he's the new mayor, Mayor Dave Bing, great ballplayer. My game is a little like Dave Bing's—[*laughter*]—except I don't have the jump shot or the speed or the ball handling skills or the endurance. [*Laughter*] Also don't have the afro. Don't think I forgot that, Dave. I remember. [*Laughter*] I remember that.

I also want to acknowledge that we've got the Executive Director of the White House Council on Auto Communities and Workers, who's working hard, has a direct line to me each and every day. He's traveling constantly back here—Ed Montgomery. Please give Ed a big round of applause. And the chairman of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indian tribes, Derek Bailey, is here. Please give Derek a big round of applause. And finally, the president of the college where we are here, Jim Jacobs; give Jim Jacobs a big round of applause.

And those of you who I've missed, you know how grateful I am that you're here. And thank you all. It is wonderful to be back at Macomb. It was terrific visiting this campus as a candidate, but I have to admit, it's even better visiting as a President.

Now, this is a place where anyone, anyone with a desire to learn and to grow, to take their career to a new level or start a new career altogether has the opportunity to pursue their dream, right here in Macomb. This is a place where people of all ages and all backgrounds, even in the face of obstacles, even in the face of very difficult personal challenges, can take a chance on a brighter future for themselves and their families.

There are folks like Joe, who just told us his story. When Joe lost his job, he decided to take advantage of assistance for displaced workers. He earned his associate degree here at Macomb, and with a pretty impressive GPA, I might add. And with the help of that degree, Joe found a new job working for the new Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital as a maintenance mechanic, using the skills he learned

here and the talents that he brought to make a fresh start.

There are workers like Kellie Kulman, who is here today. Where's Kellie? Raise your hand, Kellie. Where are you? There you are. There's Kellie right there. Kellie is a UAW worker at a Ford plant in Sterling Heights, Michigan. She used to drive a fork lift, right? But then she decided to train here at Macomb for a job that required new skills, and now she's an apprentice pipe fitter. It's a telling example: Even as this painful restructuring takes place in our auto industry, workers are seeking out training for new auto jobs. And Joe and Kellie's story make clear what all of you know: Community colleges are an essential part of our recovery in the present and our prosperity in the future. This place can make the future better, not just for these individuals but for America.

Now, since this recession began 20 months ago, 6.5 million Americans have lost their jobs, and I don't have to tell you Michigan in particular has been hard-hit. Now, I—the statistics are daunting. The whole country now, the unemployment rate is approaching 10 percent. Here in Michigan, it's about 5 points higher. And new jobs reports are going to be coming out, and we're going to see continuing job loss even as the economy is beginning to stabilize.

Now, that's not just abstractions. Those just aren't numbers on a page. Those are extraordinary hardships, tough times for families and individuals who've worked hard all their lives and have done the right things all their lives. And if you haven't lost a job, chances are you know somebody who has: a family member, a neighbor, a friend, a coworker. And you know that as difficult as the financial struggle can be, the sense of loss is about more than just a paycheck, because most of us define ourselves by the work we do. That's part of what it means to be an American. We take pride in work, that sense that you're contributing, supporting your family, meeting your responsibilities. People need work not just for income, but because it makes you part of that fabric of the community that's so important. And so when you lose your job and when entire communities are losing thousands of jobs, that's a heavy burden, that's a heavy weight.

Now, my administration has a job to do as well, and that job is to get this economy back on its feet. That's my job, and it's a job I gladly accept. I love these folks who helped get us in this mess and then suddenly say, well, this is Obama's economy. [*Laughter*] That's fine. Give it to me. My job is to solve problems, not to stand on the sidelines and carp and gripe.

So I welcome the job. I want the responsibility. And I know that—let's just take an example. Many questioned our efforts to help save GM and Chrysler from collapse earlier this year. Their feeling was these companies were driven to the brink by poor management decisions over a long period of time, and like any business, they should be held accountable for those decisions. I agreed that they should be held accountable. But I also recognized the historic significance and economic prominence of these companies in communities all across Michigan and all across the country.

I thought about the hundreds of thousands of Americans whose livelihoods are still connected to the American auto industry and the impact on an already struggling economy, especially right here in Michigan. So I said that if Chrysler and GM were willing to fundamentally restructure their businesses and make the hard choices necessary to become competitive now and in the future, it was a process worth supporting.

Now, today, after a painful period of soul-searching and sacrifice, both GM and Chrysler have emerged from bankruptcy. Remember, folks said there was no way they could do it. They've gotten it done already, in record time, far faster than anybody thought possible. They've got a leaner structure; they've got new management and a viable vision of how to compete and win in the 21st century. And those sacrifices were shared among all the stakeholders: workers and management, creditors and shareholders, retirees and communities. And together, they've made the rebirth of Chrysler and GM possible. It was the right thing to do.

But even with this positive news, the hard truth is, is that some of the jobs that have been

lost in the auto industry and elsewhere won't be coming back. They're the casualties of a changing economy. In some cases, just increased productivity in the plants themselves means that some jobs aren't going to return. And that only underscores the importance of generating new businesses and new industries to replace the ones that we've lost and of preparing our workers to fill the jobs they create. For even before this recession hit, we were faced with an economy that was simply not creating or sustaining enough new, well paying jobs.

So now is the time to change all that. What we face is far more than a passing crisis. This is a transformative moment. And in this moment we must do what other generations have done. It's not the time to shrink from the challenges we face and put off tough decisions. That's what Washington has done for decades, and it's exactly why I ran for President—to change that mindset. Now is the time to build a firmer, stronger foundation for growth that will not only withstand future economic storms, but that will help us thrive and compete in a global economy. To build that foundation, we have to slow the growth of health care costs that are driving us into debt. We're going to have to do that, and there's going to be a major debate over the next 3 weeks. And don't be fooled by folks trying to scare you, saying we can't change the health care system. We have no choice but to change the health care system, because right now it's broken for too many Americans. We're going to have to make tough choices necessary to bring down deficits. But don't let folks fool you; the best way to start bringing down deficits is to get control of our health care costs, which is why we need reform.

Now is the time to create the jobs of the future by growing industries, including a new clean energy economy. And Jennifer Granholm has been all on top of this as the Governor of Michigan. She is bring cleaning energy jobs right here to Michigan, and we've got to support her in that effort.

I want Michigan to build windmills and wind turbines and solar panels and biofuel plants and energy-efficient light bulbs and weatherize all our—of that, because, Michigan, you know bad weather. [*Laughter*] So you can be all on top of weatherizing. You need to weatherize. [*Laughter*] I know about that in Chicago too. [*Laughter*]

But we also have to ensure that we're educating and preparing our people for the new jobs of the 21st century. We've got to prepare our people with the skills they need to compete in this global economy. Time and again, when we've placed our bet for the future on education, we have prospered as a result, by tapping the incredible innovative and generative potential of a skilled American workforce. That's what happened when President Lincoln signed into law legislation creating the land-grant colleges, which not only transformed higher education but also our entire economy. That's what took place when President Roosevelt signed the GI bill, which helped educate a generation and ushered in an era of unprecedented prosperity. That was the foundation for the American middle class.

And that's why, at the start of my administration I set a goal for America: By 2020, this Nation will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. We used to have that. We're going to have it again. And we've begun to take historic steps to achieve this goal. Already we've increased Pell grants by $500. We've created a $2,500 tax credit for 4 years of college tuition. We've simplified student aid applications and ensured that aid is not based on the income of a job that you just lost. A new GI bill of rights for the 21st century is beginning to help soldiers coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan to begin a new life in a new economy. And the recovery plan has helped close State budget shortfalls, which put enormous pressure on public universities and community colleges, at the same time making historic investments in school libraries and classrooms and facilities all across America. So we've already taken some steps that are building the foundation for a 21st-century education system here in America, one that will allow us to compete with China and India and everybody else all around the world.

But today I'm announcing the most significant downpayment yet on reaching the goal of having the highest college graduation rate of any nation in the world. We're going to achieve

this in the next 10 years. And it's called the american graduation initiative. It will reform and strengthen community colleges like this one from coast to coast so they get the resources that students and schools need and the results workers and businesses demand. Through this plan, we seek to help an additional 5 million Americans earn degrees and certificates in the next decade—5 million.

Not since the passage of the original GI bill and the work of President Truman's Commission on Higher Education, which helped to double the number of community colleges and increase by seven-fold enrollment in those colleges, have we taken such a historic step on behalf of community colleges in America. And let me be clear: We pay for this plan. This isn't adding to the deficit. We're paying for this plan by ending the wasteful subsidies we currently provide to banks and private lenders for student loans. That will save tens of billions of dollars over the next 10 years. Instead of lining the pockets of special interests, it's time this money went towards the interests of higher education in America. That's what my administration is committed to doing.

Now, I know that for a long time there have been politicians who have spoken of training as a silver bullet and college as a cure-all. It's not, and we know that. I can't tell you how many workers who've been laid off, you talk to them about training, and they say, "Training for what?" So I understand the frustrations that a lot of people have, especially if the training is not well designed for the specific jobs that are being created out there.

But we know that in the coming years, jobs requiring at least an associate degree are projected to grow twice as fast as jobs requiring no college experience. We will not fill those jobs or even keep those jobs here in America without the training offered by community colleges. That's why I want to applaud Governor Granholm for the No Worker Left Behind program. It's providing up to 2 years' worth of free tuition at community colleges and universities across the State. The rest of the country should learn from the effort.

This is training to become a medical technician or a health IT worker or a lab specialist or a nurse. In fact, 59 percent of all new nurses come from community colleges. This is training to install solar panels and build those wind turbines we were talking about and develop a smarter electricity grid. And this is the kind of education that more and more Americans are using to improve their skills and broaden their horizons. And many young people are saving money by spending 2 years at community college before heading to a 4-year college. And more workers who have lost their jobs, or fear losing a job, are seeking an edge at schools like this one.

At the same time, community colleges are under increasing pressure to cap enrollments and scrap courses and cut costs as States and municipalities face budget shortfalls. And this is in addition to the challenges you face in the best of times, as these schools receive far less funding per student than typical 4-year colleges and universities. So community colleges are an undervalued asset in our country. Not only is that not right, it's not smart. And that's why I've asked Dr. Jill Biden, who happens to be a relation of the Vice President, Joe Biden, but who is also a community college educator for more than 16 years, to promote community colleges and help us make community colleges stronger. And that's why we're putting in place this american graduation initiative.

Let me describe for you the specifics of what we're going to do. Number one: We will offer competitive grants, challenging community colleges to pursue innovative, results-oriented strategies in exchange for Federal funding. We'll fund programs that connect students looking for jobs with businesses that are looking to hire. We'll challenge these schools to find new and better ways to help students catch up on the basics, like math and science, that are essential to our competitiveness. We'll put colleges and employers together to create programs that match curricula in the classroom with the needs of the boardroom.

These are all kinds of—there are all kinds of examples of what's possible. We've seen Cisco, for example, working with community colleges to prepare students and workers for jobs ranging from work in broadband to health IT. We know that the most successful community

colleges are those that partner with the private sector. So we want to encourage more companies to work with schools to build these type of relationships. That way, when somebody goes through a training program, they know that there's a job at the end of that training.

We'll also create a new research center with a simple mission: to measure what works and what doesn't. All too often, we don't know what happens when somebody walks out of a classroom and onto the factory floor or into the library or the laboratory or the office. And that means businesses often can't be sure what a degree is really worth. And schools themselves don't have the facts to make informed choices about which programs receive—achieve results and which programs don't. And this is important, not just for businesses and colleges, but for students and workers as well. If a parent is going to spend time in the classroom and away from his or her family, especially after a long day at work, that degree really has to mean something. They have to know that when they get that degree, this is going to help advance their goals. If a worker is going to spend 2 years training to enter into a whole new profession, that certificate has to mean that he or she is ready and that businesses are ready to hire.

In addition, we want to propose new funding for innovative strategies that promote not just enrollment in a community college program, but completion of that program. See, more than half of all students who enter community college to earn an associate degree or transfer to a 4-year school to earn a bachelor's degree, unfortunately, fail to reach their goal. That's not just a waste of a valuable resource, that's a tragedy for these students. Oftentimes they've taken out debt, and they don't get the degree, but they still have to pay back the debt. And it's a disaster for our economy.

So we'll fund programs that track student progress inside and outside the classroom. Let's figure out what's keeping students from crossing that finish line and then put in place reforms that will remove those barriers. Maybe it becomes too difficult for a parent to be away from home or too expensive for a waiter or a nurse to miss a shift. Maybe a young student just isn't sure if her education will lead to employment. The point is, we need to figure out solutions for these kinds of challenges, because facing these impediments shouldn't prevent you from reaching your potential.

All right, so that's a big chunk of this first part of this initiative. The second part: We're going to back $10 billion in loans to renovate and rebuild college classrooms and buildings all across the country. All too often, community colleges are treated like the stepchild of the higher education system; they're an afterthought, if they're thought of at all. And that means schools are often years behind in the facilities they provide, which means, in a 21st-century economy, they're years behind in the education they can offer. That's a mistake, and it's one that we'll help to correct. Through this fund, schools will have the chance to borrow at a more affordable rate to modernize facilities, and they'll be building on the funds in the recovery plan that are already helping to renovate schools, including community colleges all across the country. And by the way, not only does this improve the schools and the training that they're providing, guess what? You also have to hire some workers and some trades men and women to do the work on those schools. So it means it's putting people to work in Michigan, right here right now.

Number three, even as we repair bricks and mortar, we have an opportunity to build a new virtual infrastructure to complement the education and training community colleges can offer. So we're going to support the creation of a new online, open-source clearinghouse of courses so that community colleges across the country can offer more classes without building more classrooms. And this will make a big difference, especially for rural campuses that a lot of times have struggled—attract—have to struggle to attract students and faculty. And this will make it possible for a professor to complement his lecture with an online exercise or for a student who can't be away from her family to still keep up with her coursework. We don't know where this kind of experiment will lead, but that's exactly why we ought to try it, because I think there's a possibility that online education can provide especially for people who are already in the workforce and want to retrain the chance to

upgrade their skills without having to quit their job.

So let me say this more: The road to recovery, the road to prosperity, is going to be hard. It was never going to be easy. When I was sworn in, we were seeing 700 [thousand]* jobs lost that month. Then we had the same amount lost for 2 more consecutive months. Now we've got an average of about 400,000 jobs lost, but we're still losing too many jobs. We will get to the point where we're not losing jobs, but then we've got to start getting to the point where we're actually creating jobs.

And it's going to take time. There are going to be false starts, and there are going to be setbacks. But I am confident that we can meet the challenges we face, because that's what we've always done. That's what America does. We hit some challenges, we fuss and argue about it, and then we go ahead and go about the business of solving our problems. That's what we see on display right here at Macomb Community College. That's what I've seen at colleges and universities all across this country. At every juncture in our history when we've been challenged, we have summoned the resilience and the industriousness, that can-do American spirit that has allowed us to succeed in the face of even the toughest odds.

That's what we can and must do now, not just to overcome this crisis, but to leave something better behind, to lay a foundation on which our children and our grandchildren can prosper and take responsibility for their future, just as the students at this school, at this difficult moment, are taking responsibility for theirs. I am absolutely confident that if I've got your help that we can make it happen, and we are going to see a stronger, more prosperous Michigan in the years to come.

Thank you very much, Warren. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:37 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Joseph Iezzi, maintenance mechanic, Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital, who introduced the President; Rep. Andy Dillon, speaker of the house, Michigan State House of Representatives; and Mayor David Bing of Detroit, MI.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Health Care Reform Legislation

July 14, 2009

For decades, Washington failed to act as health care costs continued to rise, crushing businesses and families and placing an unsustainable burden on governments. But today key Committees in the House of Representatives have engaged in unprecedented cooperation to produce a health care reform proposal that will lower costs, provide better care for patients, and ensure fair treatment of consumers by the insurance industry.

This proposal controls the skyrocketing cost of health care by rooting out waste and fraud and promoting quality and accountability. Its savings of more than $500 billion over 10 years will strengthen Medicare and contribute to our goal of reforming health care in a fiscally responsible way. It will change the incentives in our health care system so that Americans can receive the best care, not the most expensive care, and it will offer families and businesses more choices and more affordable health care.

This proposal will also prevent insurance companies from denying people coverage because of a preexisting medical condition. It will ensure that workers can still have health

* White House correction.

insurance if they lose their job, change their job, or start a new business. And it includes a health insurance exchange that will allow families and small businesses to compare prices and quality so they can choose the health care plan that best suits their needs. Among the choices that would be available in the exchange would be a public health insurance option that would make health care affordable by increasing competition, providing more choices, and keeping the insurance companies honest.

The House proposal will begin the process of fixing what's broken about our health care system, reducing costs for all, building on what works, and covering an estimated 97 percent of all Americans. And by emphasizing prevention and wellness, it will also help improve the quality of health care for every American.

I thank Chairmen Rangel, Waxman, and Miller for their hard work on this bill that fundamentally reforms the health care system. As this process moves forward, I look forward to continuing to work with all House Members in ensuring this legislation helps all Americans and plays an essential role in reducing deficits and bringing fiscal sustainability to our Nation.

Statement on the Reelection of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia
July 14, 2009

The people of Indonesia held a free and fair election on July 8, and President Yudhoyono has impressively won reelection. I wish to offer my personal congratulations to President Yudhoyono and make clear America's desire to work with him and the Indonesian people in the years to come to build an even stronger relationship between our two countries.

The high voter turnout, spirited campaigns by all contending parties, and high level of interest among Indonesia's media, civic organizations, and voting public are all evidence of the strength and dynamism of Indonesia's young democracy. Indonesia has been playing a greater role internationally in recent years, and we welcome this role. Indonesia has made important contributions in Asia and the world in such areas as peacekeeping, environmental preservation and protection, the development of multilateral organizations in the Asia Pacific region, and the promotion of democracy and civil society, to name a few.

The relationship between the United States and Indonesia is based on common interests and common values, including, tolerance, respect for human rights and diversity, and promotion of economic development. President Yudhoyono and I are committed to working together to develop a comprehensive partnership that builds upon these shared values, interests, and our common aspirations.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Review of Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996
July 14, 2009

Dear _____:

Consistent with section 306(c)(2) of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–114) (the "Act"), I hereby determine and report to the Congress that suspension, for 6 months beyond August 1, 2009, of the right to bring an action under title III of the Act is necessary to the national interests of the United States and will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Daniel K. Inouye, chairman, and W. Thad Cochran, vice chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations;

John F. Kerry, chairman, and Richard G. Lugar, ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; David R. Obey, chairman, and C.J. "Jerry" Lewis, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations; and Howard L. Berman, chairman, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, ranking member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Remarks on Health Care Reform
July 15, 2009

Hello, everybody. Good afternoon. I am pleased to be joined by not only some of my former colleagues and outstanding legislators, but also by nurses. And I think I've said this before: I really like nurses. [*Laughter*] And so to have them here today on behalf of such a critical issue at a critical time is extraordinary.

Let me introduce a few of them. We've got Becky Patton, who's the president of the American Nurses Association here. Raise your hand, Becky. We have Dr. Mary Wakefield, who's a nurse and happens to be the Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration at HHS, our highest ranking nurse in the administration. We've got Keisha Walker, an RN, currently a senior research nurse at Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health. We have Dr. Rebecca Wiseman, nurse and assistant professor of adult health at the University of Maryland School of Nursing. And I'm also joined by Representative Johnson, Representative Capps, Representative McCarthy, Chairman George Miller, and my friend Chris Dodd.

I am very pleased to be joined today by the representatives from the American Nurses Association on behalf of 2.9 million registered nurses in America, men and women who know as well as anyone the urgent need for health reform.

Now, as I said before, I have a longstanding bias towards nurses. When Sasha, our younger daughter, was diagnosed with a dangerous case of meningitis when she was just 3 months old, we were terrified. And we were appreciative of the doctors, but it was the nurses who walked us through the entire process to make sure that Sasha was okay.

When both my daughters were born, the obstetrician was one of our best friends, but we saw her for about 10 minutes in each delivery. The rest of the time what we saw were nurses who did an incredible amount of work in not only taking care of Michelle but also caring for a nervous husband and then later for a couple of fat little babies.

So I know how important nurses are, and the Nation does too. Nurses aren't in health care to get rich. Last I checked, they're in it to care for all of us, from the time they bring a new life into this world to the moment they ease the pain of those who pass from it. If it weren't for nurses, many Americans in underserved and rural areas would have no access to health care at all.

And that's why it's safe to say that few understand why we have to pass reform as intimately as our Nation's nurses. They see firsthand the heartbreaking costs of our health care crisis. They hear the same stories that I've heard across this country—of treatment deferred or coverage denied by insurance companies; of insurance premiums and prescriptions that are so expensive they consume a family's entire budget; of Americans forced to use the emergency room for something as simple as a sore throat just because they can't afford to see a doctor.

And they understand that this is a problem that we can no longer defer. We can't kick the can down the road any longer. Deferring reform is nothing more than defending the status quo. And those who would oppose our efforts should take a hard look at just what it is that they're defending. Over the last decade, health insurance premiums have risen three times faster than wages. Deductibles and out-of-pocket costs are skyrocketing. And every single day we wait to act, thousands of Americans lose their insurance, some turning to nurses in emergency rooms as their only recourse.

So make no mistake, the status quo on health care is not an option for the United

States of America. It's threatening the financial stability of families, of businesses, and of government. It's unsustainable, and it has to change.

I know a lot of Americans who are satisfied with their health care right now are wondering what reform would mean for them, so let me be clear: If you like your doctor or health care provider, you can keep them. If you like your health care plan, you can keep that too.

But here's what else reform will mean for you—and this is for people who have health insurance: You will save money. If you lose your job, change your job, or start a new business, you'll still be able to find quality health insurance that you can afford. If you have a preexisting medical condition, no insurance company will be able to deny you coverage. You won't have to worry about being priced out of the market. You won't have to worry about one illness leading your family into financial ruin. That's what reform means, not just for the uninsured but for the people who have health insurance right now.

And the naysayers and the cynics still doubt that we can do this. But it wasn't too long ago that those same naysayers doubted that we'd be able to make real progress on health care reform. And thanks to the work of key committees in Congress, we're now closer to the goal of health reform than we have ever been.

Yesterday the House introduced its health reform proposal. Today, thanks to the unyielding passion and inspiration of our friend Ted Kennedy and to the bold leadership of Senator Chris Dodd, the Senate HELP Committee reached a major milestone by passing a similarly strong proposal for health reform. It's a plan that was debated for more than 50 hours and that, by the way, includes 160 Republican amendments, a hopeful sign of bipartisan support for the final product, if people are serious about bipartisanship.

Both proposals will take what's best about our system today and make it the basis for our system tomorrow, reducing costs, raising quality, and ensuring fair treatment of consumers by the insurance industry. Both include a health insurance exchange, a marketplace that will allow families and small businesses to compare prices, services, and the quality, so they can choose the plan that best suits their needs. And among the choices available would be a public health insurance option that would make health care more affordable by increasing competition, providing more choices, and keeping insurance companies honest. Both proposals will offer stability and security to Americans who have coverage today and affordable options to those who don't.

Now, this progress should make us hopeful, but it can't make us complacent. It should instead provide the urgency for both the House and the Senate to finish their critical work on health reform before the August recess.

America's nurses need us to succeed, not just on behalf of the patients that they sometimes speak for. If we invest in prevention, nurses won't have to treat diseases or complications that could have been avoided. If we modernize health records, we'll streamline the paperwork that can take up more than one-third of the average nurse's day, freeing them to spend more time with their patients. If we make their jobs a little bit easier, we can attract and train the young nurses we need to make up a nursing shortage that's only getting worse. Nurses do their part every time they check another healthy patient out of the hospital. It's now time for us to do our part.

Now, I just want to be clear: We are going to get this done. Becky and I were talking in the Oval Office. And Becky just pointed out we need to buck up people a little bit here. [*Laughter*] And that's what nurses do all the time. They buck up patients, sometimes they buck up some young resident who doesn't quite know what they're doing. [*Laughter*] You look at Becky, you can tell she knows what she's doing. And what she's saying is it's time for us to buck up—Congress, this administration, the entire Federal Government—to be clear that we've got to get this done.

Our nurses are on board. The American people are on board. It's now up to us. We can do what we've done for so long and defer tough decisions for another day, or we can step up and meet our responsibilities. In other words, we can lead. We can look beyond the next news cycle and the next election to the next generation

and come together to build a system that works not just for these nurses, but for the patients they care for, for doctors and hospitals, for families and businesses, and for our very future as a nation.

I'm confident it's going to get done because we've got a great team behind us. And we are going to be continually talking about this for the next 2 to 3 weeks until we've got a bill off the Senate and we've got a bill out of the House. Then we'll deserve a few weeks rest before we come back and finally get a bill done so we can sign it right here in the Rose Garden.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:11 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Statement on Senate Action on Health Care Reform Legislation
July 15, 2009

Today, thanks to the unyielding passion and inspiration provided by Senator Edward Kennedy, the HELP Committee he chairs has produced a proposal that will finally lower health care costs, provide better care for patients, and ensure fair treatment of consumers by the insurance industry.

Like the legislation produced by the House of Representatives, this proposal would offer Americans quality, affordable health care that is there when they need it. No longer will insurance companies be able to deny coverage based on a preexisting medical condition. No longer will Americans have to worry about their health insurance if they lose their job, change their job, or open a new business.

This proposal will bring down costs, expand coverage, and increase choice. Through a health insurance exchange, families and small businesses will be able to compare prices and quality so that they can choose the health care plan that best suits their needs. Among the choices that would be available in the exchange would be a public health insurance option that would make health care affordable by increasing competition, providing more choices, and keeping the insurance companies honest.

This proposal would also control rising costs by investing in preventive care and wellness programs, rooting out waste and fraud in the system, and changing the incentives that automatically equate the most expensive care with the best care. When this proposal is combined with other proposals that the Senate Finance Committee is working on, it's estimated that health reform will cover 97 percent of all Americans.

The HELP Committee's success should give us hope, but it should not give us pause. It should instead provide the urgency for both the House and Senate to finish their critical work on health reform before the August recess. I want to commend Senator Kennedy, Senator Dodd, as well as Senators Harkin, Mikulski, Bingaman, and Murray on the leadership they've shown and the foundation they've laid to reform our health care system.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Education Reform Legislation
July 15, 2009

I applaud Chairman Miller for introducing an education reform bill that will cut giveaways to special interests, invest in our children's future, and save taxpayers' money.

Chairman Miller and I are working to end the wasteful subsidies that are given to banks and private lenders for student loans. Instead, his legislation will make college more affordable by paying for annual increases in Pell grants that keep pace with inflation. He's also working with us to simplify financial aid forms and increase graduation rates.

This legislation will also help us reach the goal I set out in Michigan this week to

graduate 5 million more Americans from community colleges by 2020. These institutions can act as job training centers for the 21st century, and this legislation makes the largest investment in community colleges in 50 years, challenging them to increase completion rates, strengthen ties with businesses, modernize facilities, and offer new online learning opportunities. Chairman Miller's legislation will also invest in high-quality early education that can save taxpayers several dollars for every one we spend. It includes $10 billion for early learning challenge grants that will ask States to ensure that the number of children who start school ready to learn is growing each year.

Finally, I am proud that this legislation not only pays for itself, but also saves taxpayers money and reduces the deficit. I look forward to working with the chairman and Congress to make this bill even stronger and pass it before the end of the year.

Remarks at a Fundraiser for Governor Jon S. Corzine in Holmdel, New Jersey
July 16, 2009

Thank you. It is good to see you. Hello, New Jersey. All right, everybody have a seat. Everybody have a seat. I want to begin by just making a few acknowledgements. First of all, I'm going to have a lot to say about this guy, but I just want everybody to know that one of my earliest supporters, somebody who had faith and confidence in me before I was a United States Senator was the man standing next to me right here, Jon Corzine. And so it is a special honor to be with him.

I've got a couple other friends I want to quickly acknowledge. Larry Cohen is around here somewhere—CWA—right here. We appreciate you, Larry, president of the Communication Workers. We've got a couple of outstanding mayors: The pride of Newark, Cory Booker is here—there's Cory in the back; and we've also got the pride of Jersey City, Jerramiah Healy.

I want to just say a little something at the top. As many of you may have heard, five officers were shot in the line of duty in Jersey City. Jerramiah may—I just saw him. We just discussed it. He may already be on his way back. Obviously, we are watching this closely. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of all the officers who've been hurt. And we are confident they are going to end up coming back strong as ever. But it's a reminder for all of us of the incredible sacrifice that our law enforcement officials engage in, and their families are part of, each and every day. So I hope everybody keeps them in their thoughts and prayers in the days to come.

It is great to be back in New Jersey. I'm proud to stand with a man who wakes up every single day thinking about your future and the future of the State, and that's your Governor, Jon Corzine.

Like many of us in public life today, Jon is a leader who's been called to govern at some extraordinary times. He's been tested by the worst recession in half a century, a recession that was caused by years of recklessness and irresponsibility, and obviously, had a disproportionate impact here in New Jersey, given the closeness of the financial sector to the State.

Part of the crisis was caused by the same small thinking that's plagued our politics for decades, the kind of thinking that says we can afford to tinker around with big problems, put off tough decisions, defer the big challenges, tell people only what they want to hear.

That's not the kind of leader Jon Corzine is. He didn't run for this office on the promise that change would be easy, and he certainly has not avoided what is hard. This isn't somebody who's here because of some special interest or political machine, he's here because he cares about what happens to the people of New Jersey.

This is a man who has provided more property tax relief than any other Governor in New Jersey's history. This is the first Governor in 60 years who has reduced the size of government. At the same time, this is also a leader who has stood up against those who wanted to cut what matters, like education. Jon Corzine has not only protected funding for New Jersey's schools, he's reformed them with higher standards, and

now students in this State rank at the top of the country in reading and math. That's a testimony to Jon Corzine's leadership.

Since Jon Corzine became Governor, the Children's Health Insurance Program has been expanded to reach 80,000 more children—80,000 who've got health insurance who did not have it before. New Jersey has become a leader in clean energy. And Jon Corzine wasn't just the first Governor to pass an economic recovery plan for his State, he was an ally in developing—in helping the Federal Government, my administration, develop the national recovery plan.

And because of these recovery plans, jobs have been saved and created throughout the State of New Jersey: jobs of cops and teachers, jobs in small businesses and clean energy companies. Unemployment insurance and health insurance has been extended to those who have felt the brunt of this recession, who lost their jobs. Tax relief has been delivered to families and small businesses. Ninety-five percent of working families have already received tax relief as a consequence of our recovery plan. And I can promise you that more help is on the way in the weeks and months to come.

Now, I realize this is little comfort to those who have lost a job in this recession. Some of you know people who've lost jobs, or maybe you're worried about losing their home or can't afford their health insurance anymore. I realize that some of the progress that's been made doesn't help some folks who need to pay their bills and have fallen deeply behind. And I'll be honest with you, even though jobs have always been one of the last things that come back in a recession, some of the jobs that have been lost may not come back.

The fact is, even before this crisis hit, we had an economy that was creating a good deal of wealth for the folks at the very top, but not a lot of good-paying jobs for the rest of America. It's an economy that wasn't built to compete in the 21st century. It was one where we spend more on health care than any other nation but aren't any healthier, where we've been slow to invest in clean energy technologies and have created new jobs and new industries in other countries because we've been slow to take up the call of clean energy. We had an economy where we've watched our graduation rates lag behind too much of the world. We used to be at the very top, number one, in college graduation rates; we aren't anymore. We're in the middle of the pack.

But that was the America of yesterday; that doesn't have to be the America of tomorrow. That must not be the America our children inherit. You see, what we're facing right now is more than a passing crisis, it's a transformative moment that's led this Nation to an unmistakable crossroad. We've got some choices and decisions we've got to make right here in Washington and right here in Trenton.

Now, there are some in New Jersey, some in Washington, some all across the country, who want us to go down the path we've already traveled for most of the last decade. The path where we just throw up our hands and say, "We can't do anything about health care. It's too tough. We can't do anything about energy—too hard," where we do nothing but hand out more tax breaks to the wealthiest few that make the rich richer and the deficit even larger and leave ordinary people in the lurch. That's one path. It's a path where our health care costs keep rising and our oil dependency keeps on growing, where our financial markets remain an unregulated crapshoot, and our workers lose out on the jobs of tomorrow.

But that's not the future I accept for the United States of America. That's not the future that Jon Corzine accepts for the United States of America. That's not the future you accept for the United States of America. We are going to set a new course for this Nation, and it's going to start right here in New Jersey.

We did not come as far as a country as we have because we've spent all our time looking backwards or because we stood still in the face of great challenges and said, "No we can't." We didn't get here by lowering our sights or diminishing our dreams. We are a forward-looking people, a people who have always faced the future not with fear, but with determination; not with doubt, but with hope. We've always taken great chances and reached for new horizons and remade the world around us.

And that's what we must do again. I am absolutely confident that we will weather this economic storm. But once we clear away the wreckage, the real question is: What are we going to build in its place?

Even as we rescue this economy from this crisis, I believe we have to rebuild an even better economy than we had before. We're going to have to lay a new foundation that will allow this country to thrive and compete in the global economy. And that means investing in the clean energy jobs of the future. That means educating and training our workers for those jobs. That means finally controlling the health care costs that are driving this Nation into debt.

When it comes to these issues, the naysayers seem to think that we can somehow just keep on doing what we've been doing and expect a different outcome. We can't. And everywhere we go, I meet Americans who know that we can't. They know change isn't easy. They know there will be setbacks and false starts. And I love some of our opponents who stand up and say, "Look, it's been 6 months and you haven't solved the economy yet." [*Laughter*] The American people know better than that.

Here is what they also know: We're at a rare moment where we've been given the opportunity to remake our world, a chance to seize our future. And as difficult as it sometimes is, what is inherent about the American spirit is the fact that we don't cling to the past in this country; we always move forward. And that movement doesn't begin in Washington, it begins with you. It happens because the American people decide it's time to move forward, because you decide it's time for change, because you're willing to face the future without fear. And if you do that now, then we will not only reelect Jon Corzine so he can keep on fighting for families here in New Jersey, but we will do what earlier generations have done and build something better to leave to our children and secure our future in the 21st century.

We are counting on you. And I'm absolutely confident that the American people are going to meet the test. Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:28 p.m. at the Robert B. Meyner Reception Center. In his remarks, he referred to Larry Cohen, president, Communications Workers of America; Mayor Cory A. Booker of Newark, NJ; Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy of Jersey City, NJ; and Jersey City police officers Marc DiNardo, Michael Camacho, Dennis Mitchell, Frank Molina, Jr., and Marc Lavelle, who were wounded in the line of duty on July 9.

Remarks at a Rally for Governor Jon S. Corzine in Holmdel
July 16, 2009

The President. Hello, New Jersey. Oh, this is a good-looking crowd here. Thank you. It is good to be back in New Jersey. A couple of quick acknowledgments. First of all, I want to acknowledge a few of the elected officials who have just done great work for New Jersey: Jersey City Mayor Jerramiah Healy; Newark Mayor Cory Booker; Governor Codey is in the house. I want to thank the Abundant Life Church Choir for the music.

I also just want to take a moment—I know many of you heard that five officers in Jersey City were shot in the line of duty this morning. I've been in contact with Mayor Healy about this issue, and obviously, all the families are in our thoughts and prayers. It's a reminder of what our law enforcement officials do each and every day to protect us and to protect our families. And we need to keep them in mind as we go forward.

It's a little warm here. I think we're going to have to take off my jackets—[*inaudible*].

Audience member. We love you.

The President. I love you back.

I want you to know I'm proud to stand with a man who wakes up every day thinking about your future and the future of Jersey, and that's your Governor, Jon Corzine.

Like many of us in public life today, Jon's a leader who's been called to govern in some extraordinary times. He's been tested by the worst recession in half a century, a recession that was

caused by years of recklessness and irresponsibility and a do-nothing attitude. It was caused by the same small thinking that has plagued our politics for decades, the kind of thinking that says we can afford to just tinker around with our problems; we can put off the tough decisions, defer the big challenges. We can just tell people what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear.

Well that's not the kind of leader that Jon Corzine is. Jon Corzine didn't run for this office on the promise that change would be easy. He hasn't avoided doing what's hard. This isn't somebody who's here because of some special interest or political machine; this is a man who is here because he cares about what is right in New Jersey and for New Jersey.

Let's take a look at the record. This is a man who has provided more property tax relief than any other Governor in New Jersey history. This is the first Governor in 60 years who has reduced the size of government, not just talked about it. This is a leader who has stood up against those who wanted to cut what really matters, like education. Jon Corzine has not only protected funding for New Jersey's schools, he reformed them with tougher standards. And now students in New Jersey rank at the top of the country in reading and math because of Jon Corzine.

Since Jon Corzine became Governor, the Children's Health Insurance Program has been expanded by 80,000 more kids—80,000 more children have health insurance who didn't have it before. New Jersey's become a leader in clean energy. Jon Corzine wasn't just the first Governor to pass an economic recovery plan for his State; he was an ally with the Obama administration in helping us develop a national recovery plan.

And because of these plans, jobs have been saved and created in the State of New Jersey: jobs of cops and teachers; jobs in small businesses and clean energy companies. Uninsurance—unemployment insurance and health insurance have been extended to those who've felt the brunt of this recession and lost their jobs. Tax relief has been delivered to families and small businesses all across the State. And I can promise you this, that more help is on the way in the weeks and months to come.

Now, I realize this is little comfort to those of you who've lost jobs in this recession or know somebody who has. I realize that there are a lot of folks who are worrying about losing their home, worried about paying the bills, putting food on the table. And I'll be honest with you, even though jobs have always been one of the last things that come back in a recession, some of the jobs that have been lost may not come back.

Because the fact is, even before this crisis hit, we had an economy that was creating a great deal for the folks at the very top, but not a lot of good-paying jobs for the rest of America. We didn't have an economy that was built to compete in the 21st century, one where we—I mean, think about the economy before the recession. We had an economy where we spend more on health care than any other nation on Earth but we aren't any healthier; where we've been slow to invest in the clean energy technologies that will create new jobs and industries right here in America. We had an economy where we watched our graduation rates lag behind the rest of the world. We used to be number one in college graduation rates; now we're in the middle of the pack at a time when knowledge has never been more important for economic success.

We inherited an economy where Washington didn't pay for anything, made a lot of promises, so we ended up inheriting a $1.3 trillion deficit. Financial regulation, nobody even thought of, and as a consequence, people could take enormous risks and have Main Street end up paying the cost.

But you know what? That was the America of yesterday. We're now looking at the America of tomorrow. We're going forward. That's not the America our children is—are going to inherit. We're going forward, New Jersey, because what we're facing right now is more than just a passing crisis; it is a transformative moment that has led this Nation to an unmistakable crossroads.

There are some in Washington, and probably some in Trenton, who want us to just go down the path we've already traveled for most

of the last decade, to do the same old, same old; the path where we just throw up our hands at the challenges we face. You hear those voices now: "Oh, health care is too hard; we can't do health care reform." "Oh, energy, that's too hard; we can't free ourselves from dependence on foreign oil." "Oh, we can't regulate Wall Street; no, that's too hard." The only thing they're offering is more tax breaks to the wealthiest few that make the rich richer and the deficit larger and leave you holding the bag. That's their idea of America.

It's a path where our health care costs keep rising, where our oil dependency keeps on growing, where our financial markets remain an unregulated crapshoot, where our workers lose out on the jobs of tomorrow. Jersey, I want you to know that's not a future that I accept; that's not a future that Jon Corzine accepts; that's not a future that you accept. We are moving in a new direction. That's what we believe in.

We did not come this far as a country because we've looked backwards or stood still in the face of great challenges. We didn't arrive to this place by lowering our sights or diminishing our dreams. We are a forward-looking people; we face the future without fear, but with determination; not with doubt, but with hope. We've always been willing to take great chances and reach for new horizons and remake the world around us. And that's what we must do again.

I am absolutely confident that we will weather this particular economic storm. But once we clear away the wreckage, the real question is, what will we build in its place? Even as we rescue this economy from the crisis, we've got to rebuild it so that it is better than it was before. We've got to lay a new foundation that will allow the United States of America to thrive and compete in the global economy and give every young person—Black, White, Hispanic, Asian, Native American—a chance at a better life. That means investing in the clean energy jobs of the future. That means educating and training those workers for those jobs. That means finally controlling health care costs that are driving our Nation into debt.

I want to just talk about health care for a minute. I hope you don't mind. I know it's warm, but just fan yourself a little bit. Because the health care debate is starting to heat up, so I just want to talk to you just for a brief moment about this. It's an issue that your Governor has been fighting for here in New Jersey. The reason we have to fight is not just because we're one of the only advanced nations on Earth that leaves millions with no health insurance. It's not just the fact that we spend 50 percent more than any other country, and yet we don't have better outcomes. The fact is that health care affects the financial well being and security of every single American, even those who have health insurance. It affects the health and well being and security of every single family. It affects the stability of our entire economy.

Health reform is about every one of you who's ever faced premiums and copayments that are rising faster than your salary or your wages. It's about every one of you who has ever worried that you might lose your health insurance if you lose your job or change your job. It's about anyone who's ever worried that you may not be able to get health insurance or change insurance companies if you or someone that you love has a preexisting medical condition.

Health insurance reform is about the man from Baltimore who sent us his story. Some of you know I read 10 letters from ordinary Americans every day so that I keep in touch. I don't want to go "Washington" too quick on anybody. So this man from Baltimore, he's a middle class college graduate, but when he changed jobs, his health insurance expired. And during that time, he needed emergency surgery, and he woke up $10,000 in debt, debt that has left him unable to save or buy a home or make a career change. That's who we have to reform health care for.

Reform is about the woman in Colorado who told us that when she was diagnosed with breast cancer, her insurance company—the one that she had paid over $700 a month for—refused to pay for anything connected to her disease. She felt like she had been given a second death sentence, she said. She had to pay her own treatment with her retirement funds. That woman in Colorado, that's who we're fighting for when we talk about health care reform.

Health care reform is about that small-business owner from right here in Jackson, New Jersey, who told us he employs eight people; he

provides health insurance for all of them. But his policies are going up 20 percent every year. It's his highest business expense beside the wages he pays his employees. He's already had to let two of them go. He may be forced to eliminate health insurance altogether. That man and his employees, that's who health care reform is all about.

I've heard these stories in town halls; I've read letters; I've seen them on our web sites more times than I can remember, and so has Jon Corzine. We have talked and talked and talked about fixing health care for decades. And we have finally reached a point where inaction is no longer an option, where the choice to defer reform is nothing more than a decision to defend the status quo, and I will not defend the status quo. We are going to change health care reform.

I will not stand for a future where health care premiums rise three times faster than people's wages. I will not stand for a future where 14,000 Americans lose their health insurance every day. This Nation cannot afford a future where our Government eventually is going to be spending more on Medicare than—and Medicaid than what we spend on anything else today combined.

That's what's driving our deficit; that's what's driving our debt. That's what's forcing families into debt; that's what's forcing businesses into debt. The price of doing nothing about health care is a price that every taxpayer and every business and every family will have to pay. That's unacceptable; it is unsustainable, and we are going to change it in 2009.

Now, I got to warn you, though, it's not going to be easy. There's a reason why it hasn't happened for 50 years. Harry Truman wanted to do it; couldn't get it done. Every President since that time has talked about it; hasn't gotten it done. So it's not going to be easy. And you're going to hear the same scare tactics from special interest groups that have been used to kill health care reform for decades. So let me just be clear here, New Jersey, because you're going to hear a lot of nonsense. I know that a lot of Americans are satisfied with their health care right now; they're wondering what they get out of health care reform. So let me be absolutely clear about what reform means for you.

First of all, if you've got health insurance, you like your doctor, you like your plan—you can keep your doctor, you can keep your plan. Nobody is talking about taking that away from you. But here's what reform will mean for you: It will mean lower costs and more choices and coverage you can count on. Health insurance reform will save you and your family money. If you lose your job, you change your job, you start a new business, you'll still be able to get quality health insurance you can afford. You'll have confidence that it's there for you.

Now, if you don't have health insurance, you're finally going to be able to get it at affordable prices. If you have a preexisting medical condition, no insurance company will be able to deny you coverage. You won't be worrying about being priced out of the market. You won't have to worry about one illness leading your family into financial ruin. Americans who have coverage will finally have stability and security, and Americans who don't will finally have quality, affordable options. That's what reform means.

Reform means that for the first time, we'll have a health insurance exchange. It's a fancy word for a simple concept: We're going to create a marketplace where you and your family and small businesses can go to shop for their health insurance and compare, side-by-side, prices and services and quality so that you can choose the plan that best suits your needs. And that's going to mean that insurance companies are going to have to compete for your business. And one of those choices would be a public health insurance option, an affordable plan that would finally keep the insurance companies honest, because they'd be increasing competition and promoting the best practices. So you'd have insurance companies having to look over their shoulder. They can't just price gouge, and they can't just eliminate people who are sicker or older. They'd have to cover everybody.

Most of all, I have promised that reform will not add to our Federal deficit. You're going to hear all kinds of stories about this. It will be paid for. And a big part of how we're going to

do that is by cutting out the waste and unnecessary subsidies we give to insurance companies that drive up costs for everybody.

So let me be clear: When you hear that health care reform will cost $1 trillion over 10 years, you need to know that at least half of that will be paid for by money already in the system that's being badly spent. We'll all—I mean, we're spending $177 billion to give to insurance companies instead of making sure that money is going to patients for decent care.

We'll also change incentives so that our doctors and our nurses can finally start providing patients with the best care and not just the most expensive care. And if we do that, then reform will bring down the cost of Medicare and Medicaid, and that will lower our deficits in the long run. So make no mistake about it: Health care reform is deficit reform.

This is what reform would mean for all of us. Right now we are closer to making it a reality than we have ever been. We now have the support of the hospitals; we've got the support of the doctors; we've got the support of the nurses who represent the best of our health care system and know what's broken about it. We have supporters—we have the support of Governors like Jon Corzine who know what reform would mean to the people of this State. We've made unprecedented progress in Congress, especially this week.

But now is when it gets really hard. Now is when we've got to get over the finish line. This is when you start hearing the same criticism, the same scare tactics that have held us back in the past. And if you do hear these critics, I want you to ask them a question I always ask: What's your plan? What's your alternative? What do you plan to do for all those families whose medical bills are driving them into bankruptcy? What will you do for the businesses that are choosing between closing their doors or letting go of their workers or eliminating health care for their employees? What do you have to say to every taxpayer in America whose dollars are propping up a health system that's driving us further and further into debt?

When it comes to health care or energy or education, the cynics, the naysayers, the Washington crowd, they seem to think we can somehow just keep on doing what we're doing and expect a different result. But everywhere I go, I meet Americans who know we can't do that. They know we've got to change how we're doing business. They know change isn't easy. They know that there will be setbacks and false starts. But they also know this: We are at a moment when we've been given the extraordinary opportunity to remake our world, a chance to seize our future, a chance to shape our destiny. As difficult as it sometimes is, there's something about the American spirit that says that we can—we don't have to cling to the past. We're going to look forward to the future. We're creating a movement for change, and that doesn't begin in Washington, that begins here in New Jersey.

The American people have decided it's time to move forward. You've decided it's time for change. You're willing to face the future unafraid. If you do that, if you stand with us, if you talk to your neighbors and your friends and your coworkers, you call your Members of Congress and your Senators, if you reelect Jon Corzine, if you work hard to believe in a future that is good for our children and our grandchildren, there is nothing that's going to stop us, New Jersey.

We're going to get health care reform done; we're going to get energy reform done; we're going to get education reform done; we're going to get financial regulation reform done. We're going to set our sights forward, and we are going to create the kind of America that our children deserve.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:14 p.m. at the PNC Arts Center. In his remarks, he referred to former Gov. Richard J. Codey of New Jersey; and Jersey City police officers Marc DiNardo, Michael Camacho, Dennis Mitchell, Frank Molina, Jr., and Marc Lavelle, who were wounded in the line of duty on July 9.

Statement on the American Medical Association's Support for Health Care Reform Legislation
July 16, 2009

I am grateful that the doctors of the AMA have chosen to support health insurance reform that will lower costs, expand coverage, and assure choice and quality health care for all Americans. Along with the Nation's nurses, these doctors are joining the chorus of Americans who know that the time to reform what is broken about our health care system is now.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Designating Emergency Funds To Enhance Capabilities To Combat the Global Influenza Outbreak
July 16, 2009

Dear Madam Speaker:

On June 24, I signed into law the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2009 (Public Law 111–32). Within the Act, the Congress appropriated $7.65 billion to the Department of Health and Human Services for the 2009–H1N1 influenza outbreak, including a $5.8 billion contingent appropriation for an influenza pandemic. My Administration appreciates the emergency appropriations that the Congress provided and has initiated the development and procurement of 2009–H1N1 vaccines, is expanding the domestic and international surveillance activities, and is preparing for the possibility that a mass immunization campaign may be needed in the fall.

To enhance our Nation's capability to respond to the potential spread of this outbreak, and in accordance with the appropriation, I hereby designate $1.825 billion of the contingent appropriation as emergency funds required to address critical needs related to emerging influenza viruses (specifically, the virus known as 2009–H1N1). These funds will support additional procurement of adjuvant for dose-sparing of vaccine antigen; immunization campaign planning; regulatory activities for H1N1 at the Food and Drug Administration; and funding for the administration of an injury compensation program.

There remains much uncertainty about the outbreak and its potential to return this fall during the northern hemisphere flu season. We continue to watch the evolution of the 2009–H1N1 virus and the worldwide outbreaks and are working diligently to plan and prepare for a national response, should it be necessary.

We will communicate with you further in the future should additional funds be required.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Former Liberian Regime of Charles Taylor
July 16, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed

notice stating that the national emergency and related measures dealing with the former Liberian regime of Charles Taylor are to continue in effect beyond July 22, 2009.

The actions and policies of former Liberian President Charles Taylor and other persons, in particular their unlawful depletion of Liberian resources and their removal from Liberia and secreting of Liberian funds and property, continue to undermine Liberia's transition to democracy and the orderly development of its political, administrative, and economic institutions and resources. These actions and policies continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to the former Liberian regime of Charles Taylor.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
July 16, 2009.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 17. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the NAACP in New York City
July 16, 2009

The President. Thank you. Hello, NAACP. Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat. Thank you. What an extraordinary night, capping off an extraordinary week, capping off an extraordinary 100 years at the NAACP. To Chairman Bond, Brother Justice, I am so grateful to all of you for being here. And it's just good to be among friends.

It is an extraordinary honor to be here, in the city where the NAACP was formed, to mark its centennial. What we celebrate tonight is not simply the journey the NAACP has traveled, but the journey that we as Americans have traveled over the past 100 years.

It's a journey that takes us back to a time before most of us was—were born, long before the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act and *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, back to an America just a generation past slavery. It was a time when Jim Crow was a way of life, when lynchings were all too common, when race riots were shaking cities across a segregated land.

It was in this America where an Atlanta scholar named W.E.B. Du Bois, a man of towering intellect and a fierce passion for justice, sparked what became known as the Niagara movement, where reformers united not by color but by cause, where an association was born that would, as its charter says, promote equality and eradicate prejudice among citizens of the United States.

From the beginning, these founders understood how change would come, just as King and all the civil rights giants did later. They understood that unjust laws needed to be overturned, that legislation needed to be passed, and that Presidents needed to be pressured into action. They knew that the stain of slavery and the sin of segregation had to be lifted in the courtroom and in the Legislature and in the hearts and the minds of Americans.

They also knew that here in America change would have to come from the people. It would come from people protesting lynchings, rallying against violence, all those women who decided to walk instead of taking the bus, even though they were tired after a long day of doing somebody else's laundry, looking after somebody else's children. It would come from men and women of every age and faith and every race and region taking Greyhounds on freedom rides, sitting down at Greensboro lunch counters, registering voters in rural Mississippi, knowing they would be harassed, knowing they would be beaten, knowing that some of them might never return.

Because of what they did, we are a more perfect Union. Because Jim Crow laws were overturned, Black CEOs today run Fortune 500 companies. Because civil rights laws were passed, Black mayors and Black Governors, Members of Congress serve in places where they might once have been able, not just to vote

but even take a sip of water. And because ordinary people did such ordinary—extraordinary things, because they made the civil rights movement their own, even though there may not be a plaque or their names might not be in the history books, because of their efforts, I made a little trip to Springfield, Illinois, a couple of years ago, where Lincoln once lived, and race riots once raged, and began the journey that has led me to be here tonight as the 44th President of the United States of America.

Because of them I stand here tonight, on the shoulders of giants. And I'm here to say thank you to those pioneers and thank you to the NAACP.

And yet even as we celebrate the remarkable achievements of the past 100 years, even as we inherit extraordinary progress that cannot be denied, even as we marvel at the courage and determination of so many plain folk, we know that too many barriers still remain.

We know that even as our economic crisis batters Americans of all races, African Americans are out of work more than just about anybody else, a gap that's widening here in New York City, as a detailed report this week by Comptroller Bill Thompson laid out. We know that even as spiraling health care costs crush families of all races, African Americans are more likely to suffer from a host of diseases, but less likely to own health insurance than just about anybody else. We know that even as we imprison more people of all races than any nation in the world, an African American child is roughly five times as likely as a White child to see the inside of a prison. We know that even as the scourge of HIV/AIDS devastates nations abroad, particularly in Africa, it is devastating the African American community here at home with disproportionate force. We know these things.

These are some of the barriers of our time. They're very different from the barriers faced by earlier generations. They're very different from the ones faced when fire hoses and dogs were being turned on young marchers, when Charles Hamilton Houston and a group of young Howard lawyers were dismantling segregation case by case across the land.

But what's required today, what's required to overcome today's barriers is the same as what was needed then. The same commitment, the same sense of urgency, the same sense of sacrifice, the same sense of community, the same willingness to do our part for ourselves and one another that has always defined America at its best and the African American experience at its best. And so the question is, where do we direct our efforts? What steps do we take to overcome these barriers? How do we move forward in the next 100 years?

Now, the first thing we need to do is to make real the words of the NAACP Charter and eradicate prejudice, bigotry, and discrimination among citizens of the United States. I understand there may be a temptation among some to think that discrimination is no longer a problem in 2009. And I believe that overall, there probably has never been less discrimination in America than there is today. I think we can say that.

But make no mistake, the pain of discrimination is still felt in America: by African American women paid less for doing the same work as colleagues of a different color and a different gender; by Latinos made to feel unwelcome in their own country; by Muslim Americans viewed with suspicion simply because they kneel down to pray to their God; by our gay brothers and sisters, still taunted, still attacked, still denied their rights.

On the 45th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act, discrimination cannot stand, not on account of color or gender, how you worship, or who you love. Prejudice has no place in the United States of America. That's what the NAACP stands for. That's what the NAACP will continue to fight for as long as it takes.

But we also know that prejudice and discrimination—at least, the most blatant types of prejudice and discrimination—are not even the steepest barriers to opportunity today. The most difficult barriers include structural inequalities that our Nation's legacy of discrimination has left behind, inequalities still plaguing too many communities and too often the object of national neglect.

These are barriers we are beginning to tear down one by one by rewarding work with an

expanded tax credit, by making housing more affordable, by giving ex-offenders a second chance. These are barriers we're targeting through our White House Office on Urban Affairs, through programs like Promise Neighborhoods that builds on Geoffrey Canada's success with the Harlem Children's Zone that foster a comprehensive approach to ending poverty by putting all children on a pathway to college and giving them the schooling and after-school support that they need to get there.

Now, I think all of us understand that our task of reducing these structural inequalities has been made more difficult by the state and structure of our broader economy, an economy that for the last decade has been fueled by a cycle of boom and bust, an economy where the rich got really, really rich, but ordinary folks didn't see their incomes or their wages go up, an economy built on credit cards and shady mortgage loans, an economy built not on a rock but on sand.

That's why my administration is working so hard not only to create and save jobs in the short term, not only to extend unemployment insurance and help for people who have lost their health care in this crisis, not just to stem the immediate economic wreckage, but to lay a new foundation for growth and prosperity that will put opportunity within the reach of not just African Americans, but all Americans. All Americans, of every race, of every creed, from every region of the country, we want everybody to participate in the American Dream. That's what the NAACP is all about.

Now, one pillar of this new foundation is health insurance for everybody. Health insurance reform that cuts costs and makes quality health coverage affordable for all and it closes health care disparities in the process. Another pillar is energy reform that makes clean energy profitable, freeing America from the grip of foreign oil, putting young people to work upgrading low-income homes, weatherizing them, creating jobs that can't be outsourced. Another pillar is financial reform with consumer protections that crackdown on mortgage fraud and stop predatory lenders from targeting Black and Latino communities all across the country.

All these things will make America stronger and more competitive. They will drive innovation; they will create jobs; they will provide families with more security. And yet even if we do all that, the African American community will still fall behind in the United States and the United States will fall behind in the world unless we do a far better job than we have been doing of educating our sons and daughters.

I hope you don't mind, I want to go into a little detail here about education. In the 21st century, when so many jobs will require a bachelor's degree or more, when countries that outeducate us today will outcompete us tomorrow, a world-class education is a prerequisite for success.

There's no two ways about it. There's no way to avoid it. You know what I'm talking about. There's a reason the story of the civil rights movement was written in our schools. There's a reason Thurgood Marshall took up the cause of Linda Brown. There's a reason why the Little Rock Nine defied a Governor and a mob. It's because there is no stronger weapon against inequality and no better path to opportunity than an education that can unlock a child's God-given potential.

And yet more than half a century after *Brown* v. *Board*, the dream of a world-class education is still being deferred all across the country. African American students are lagging behind White classmates in reading and math, an achievement gap that is growing in States that once led the way in the civil rights movement. Over half of all African American students are dropping out of school in some places. There are overcrowded classrooms and crumbling schools and corridors of shame in America filled with poor children, not just Black children, Brown and White children as well.

The state of our schools is not an African American problem; it is an American problem, because if Black and Brown children cannot compete, then America cannot compete. And let me say this: If Al Sharpton, Mike Bloomberg, and Newt Gingrich can agree that we need to solve the education problem, then that's something all of America can agree we can solve. Those guys came into my office. [*Laughter*] Just sitting in the Oval Office—I kept on doing a double take. [*Laughter*] But that's a sign of progress and it is a sign of the

urgency of the education problem. All of us can agree that we need to offer every child in this country—every child——

Audience members. Amen!

The President. Got an amen corner back there—[*applause*]—every child—every child in this country the best education the world has to offer from cradle through a career.

That's our responsibility as leaders. That's the responsibility of the United States of America. And we, all of us in Government, have to work to do our part by not only offering more resources but also demanding more reform. Because when it comes to education, we've got to get past this old paradigm, this outdated notion that somehow it's just money, or somehow it's just reform, but no money, and embrace what Dr. King called the "both-and" philosophy. We need more money, and we need more reform.

When it comes to higher education, we're making college and advanced training more affordable and strengthening community colleges that are the gateway to so many with an initiative that will prepare students not only to earn a degree but to find a job when they graduate, an initiative that will help us meet the goal I have set of leading the world in college degrees by 2020. We used to rank number one in college graduates. Now we are in the middle of the pack. And since we are seeing more and more African American and Latino youth in our population, if we are leaving them behind, we cannot achieve our goal, and America will fall further behind. And that is not a future that I accept, and that is not a future that the NAACP is willing to accept.

We're creating a Race to the Top fund that will reward States and public school districts that adopt 21st-century standards and assessments. We're creating incentives for States to promote excellent teachers and replace bad ones, because the job of a teacher is too important for us to accept anything less than the best.

We also have to explore innovative approaches such as those being pursued here in New York City, innovations like Bard High School Early College and Medgar Evers College Preparatory School that are challenging students to complete high school and earn a free associate's degree or college credit in just 4 years.

And we should raise the bar when it comes to early learning programs. It's not enough just to have a babysitter. We need our young people stimulated and engaged and involved. And we need our folks involved in child development to understand the latest science. Today, some early learning programs are excellent, some are mediocre, and some are wasting what studies show are by far a child's most formative years.

That's why I've issued a challenge to America's Governors: If you match the success of States like Pennsylvania and develop an effective model for early learning, if you focus reform on standards and results in early learning programs, if you demonstrate how you will prepare the lowest income children to meet the highest standards of success, then you can compete for an Early Learning Challenge Grant that will help prepare all our children to enter kindergarten all ready to learn.

So these are some of the laws we're passing. These are some of the policies we are enacting. We are busy in Washington. Folks in Congress are getting a little tuckered out. [*Laughter*] But I'm telling them we can't rest; we've got a lot of work to do. The American people are counting on us. These are some of the ways we're doing our part in Government to overcome the inequities, the injustices, the barriers that still exist in our country.

But all these innovative programs and expanded opportunities will not, in and of themselves, make a difference if each of us, as parents and as community leaders, fail to do our part by encouraging excellence in our children. Government programs alone won't get our children to the promised land. We need a new mindset, a new set of attitudes, because one of the most durable and destructive legacies of discrimination is the way we've internalized a sense of limitation, how so many in our community have come to expect so little from the world and from themselves.

We've got to say to our children, yes, if you're African American, the odds of growing up amid crime and gangs are higher. Yes, if

you live in a poor neighborhood, you will face challenges that somebody in a wealthy suburb does not have to face. But that's not a reason to get bad grades, that's not a reason to cut class, that's not a reason to give up on your education and drop out of school. No one has written your destiny for you. Your destiny is in your hands, you cannot forget that. That's what we have to teach all of our children. No excuses—no excuses. You get that education, all those hardships will just make you stronger, better able to compete. Yes we can.

To parents: We can't tell our kids to do well in school and then fail to support them when they get home. You can't just contract out parenting. For our kids to excel, we have to accept our responsibility to help them learn. That means putting away the Xbox, putting our kids to bed at a reasonable hour. It means attending those parent-teacher conferences and reading to our children and helping them with their homework.

And by the way, it means we need to be there for our neighbors' sons and daughters. We need to go back to the time, back to the day when parents saw somebody, saw some kid fooling around, and it wasn't your child, but they'll whup you anyway. [*Laughter*] Or at least they'll tell your parents, and the parents will. You know. [*Laughter*] That's the meaning of community. That's how we can reclaim the strength and the determination and the hopefulness that helped us come so far, helped us make a way out of no way.

It also means pushing our children to set their sights a little bit higher. They might think they've got a pretty good jump shot or a pretty good flow, but our kids can't all aspire to be LeBron or Lil' Wayne. I want them aspiring to be scientists and engineers, doctors and teachers, not just ballers and rappers. I want them aspiring to be a Supreme Court Justice. I want them aspiring to be the President of the United States of America. I want their horizons to be limitless. I don't—don't tell them they can't do something. Don't feed our children with a sense of—that somehow because of their race that they cannot achieve.

Yes, Government must be a force for opportunity. Yes, Government must be a force for equality. But ultimately, if we are to be true to our past, then we also have to seize our own future, each and every day.

And that's what the NAACP is all about. The NAACP was not founded in search of a handout. The NAACP was not founded in search of favors. The NAACP was founded on a firm notion of justice, to cash the promissory note of America that says all of our children, all God's children, deserve a fair chance in the race of life.

It's a simple dream and yet one that all too often has been denied and is still being denied to so many Americans. It's a painful thing, seeing that dream denied. I remember visiting a Chicago school in a rough neighborhood when I was a community organizer, and some of the children gathered round me. And I remember thinking how remarkable it was that all of these children seemed so full of hope, despite being born into poverty, despite being delivered, in some cases, into addiction, despite all the obstacles they were already facing, you could see that spark in their eyes. They were the equal of children anywhere.

And I remember the principal of the school telling me that soon that sparkle would begin to dim, that things would begin to change, that soon the laughter in their eyes would begin to fade, that soon something would shut off inside, as it sunk in—because kids are smarter than we give them credit for—as it sunk in that their hopes would not come to pass, not because they weren't smart enough, not because they weren't talented enough, not because of anything about them inherently, but because, by accident of birth, they had not received a fair chance in life.

I know what can happen to a child who doesn't have that chance. But I also know what can happen to a child that does. I was raised by a single mom. I didn't come from a lot of wealth. I got into my share of trouble as a child. My life could have easily taken a turn for the worse. When I drive through Harlem or I drive through the south side of Chicago and I see young men on the corners, I say, there but for the grace of God go I. They're no less gifted than me. They're no less talented than me.

But I had some brakes. That mother of mine, she gave me love; she pushed me; she cared

about my education; she took no lip; she taught me right from wrong. Because of her, I had a chance to make the most of my abilities. I had the chance to make the most of my opportunities. I had the chance to make the most of life.

The same story holds true for Michelle. The same story holds true for so many of you. And I want all the other Barack Obamas out there, all the other Michelle Obamas out there to have the same chance, the chance that my mother gave me, that my education gave me, that the United States of America has given me. That's how our Union will be perfected and our economy rebuilt. That is how America will move forward in the next 100 years.

And we will move forward. This I know, for I know how far we have come. Some, you saw, last week in Ghana, Michelle and I took Malia and Sasha and my mother-in-law to Cape Coast Castle in Ghana. Some of you may have been there. This is where captives were once imprisoned before being auctioned, where, across an ocean, so much of the African American experience began.

We went down into the dungeons where the captives were held. There was a church above one of the dungeons, which tells you something about saying one thing and doing another. I was—we walked through the door of no return. I was reminded of all the pain and all the hardships, all the injustices and all the indignities on the voyage from slavery to freedom.

But I was reminded of something else. I was reminded that no matter how bitter the rod, how stony the road, we have always persevered. We have not faltered, nor have we grown weary. As Americans, we have demanded and strived for and shaped a better destiny. And that is what we are called on to do once more. NAACP, it will not be easy. It will take time. Doubts may rise, and hopes may recede.

But if John Lewis could brave billy clubs to cross a bridge, then I know young people today can do their part to lift up our community. If Emmet Till's uncle, Mose Wright, could summon the courage to testify against the men who killed his nephew, I know we can be better fathers and better brothers and better mothers and sisters in our own families. If three civil rights workers in Mississippi—Black, White, Christian and Jew, city born and country bred—could lay down their lives in freedom's cause, I know we can come together to face down the challenges of our own time. We can fix our schools; we can heal our sick; we can rescue our youth from violence and despair.

And 100 years from now, on the 200th anniversary of the NAACP, let it be said that this generation did its part, that we too ran the race, that full of faith that our dark past has taught us, full of the hope that the present has brought us, we faced in our lives and all across this Nation the rising sun of a new day begun.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7 p.m. at the Hilton New York. In his remarks, he referred to Julian Bond, chairman, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, who introduced the President; Comptroller William C. Thompson, Jr., and Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg of New York City; Geoffrey Canada, president and chief executive officer, Harlem Children's Zone; Linda Brown Thompson, plaintiff in the 1954 *Brown* v. *Board of Education* Supreme Court decision; political activist Rev. Alfred C. Sharpton, Jr.; former Speaker of the House of Representatives Newton L. Gingrich; LeBron James, forward, National Basketball Association's Cleveland Cavaliers; and entertainer Dwayne M. "Lil' Wayne" Carter. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 17.

Statement on the Terrorist Attacks in Jakarta, Indonesia
July 17, 2009

I strongly condemn the attacks that occurred this morning in Jakarta and extend my deepest condolences to all of the victims and their loved ones.

The American people stand by the Indonesian people in this difficult time, and the U.S. Government stands ready to help the Indonesian Government respond to and recover from these outrageous attacks as a friend and partner.

Indonesia has been steadfast in combating violent extremism and has successfully curbed terrorist activity within its borders. However, these attacks make it clear that extremists remain committed to murdering innocent men, women, and children of any faith in all countries. We will continue to partner with Indonesia to eliminate the threat from these violent extremists, and we will be unwavering in supporting a future of security and opportunity for the Indonesian people.

Statement on the Death of Walter L. Cronkite
July 17, 2009

For decades, Walter Cronkite was the most trusted voice in America. His rich baritone reached millions of living rooms every night, and in an industry of icons, Walter set the standard by which all others have been judged.

He was there through wars and riots, marches and milestones, calmly telling us what we needed to know. And through it all, he never lost the integrity he gained growing up in the heartland.

But Walter was always more than just an anchor. He was someone we could trust to guide us through the most important issues of the day, a voice of certainty in an uncertain world. He was family. He invited us to believe in him, and he never let us down. This country has lost an icon and a dear friend, and he will be truly missed.

The President's Weekly Address
July 18, 2009

Right now in Washington, our Senate and House of Representatives are both debating proposals for health insurance reform. Today I want to speak with you about the stakes of this debate for our people and for the future of our Nation. This is an issue that affects the health and financial well being of every single American and the stability of our entire economy.

It's about every family unable to keep up with soaring out-of-pocket costs and premiums rising three times faster than wages; every worker afraid of losing health insurance if they lose their job or change jobs; everyone who's worried that they may not be able to get insurance or change insurance if someone in their family has a preexisting condition.

It's about a woman in Colorado who told us that when she was diagnosed with breast cancer, her insurance company, the one she'd paid over $700 a month to, refused to pay for her treatment. She had to use up her retirement funds to save her own life.

It's about a man from Maryland who sent us his story, a middle class college graduate whose health insurance expired when he changed jobs. During that time, he needed emergency surgery, and woke up $10,000 in debt, a debt that has left him unable to save, buy a home, or make a career change.

It's about every business forced to shut their doors or shed jobs or ship them overseas. It's about State governments overwhelmed by

Medicaid, Federal budgets consumed by Medicare, and deficits piling higher year after year.

This is the status quo. This is the system we have today. This is what the debate in Congress is all about: whether we'll keep talking and tinkering and letting this problem fester as more families and businesses go under and more Americans lose their coverage, or whether we'll seize this opportunity, one we might not have again for generations, and finally pass health insurance reform this year, in 2009.

Now, we know there are those who will oppose reform no matter what. We know the same special interests and their agents in Congress will make the same old arguments and use the same scare tactics that have stopped reform before because they profit from this relentless escalation in health care costs. And I know that once you've seen enough ads and heard enough people yelling on TV, you might begin to wonder whether there's a grain of truth to what they're saying. So let me take a moment to answer a few of their arguments.

First, the same folks who controlled the White House and Congress for the past 8 years as we ran up record deficits will argue, believe it or not, that health reform will lead to record deficits. That's simply not true. Our proposals cut hundreds of billions of dollars in unnecessary spending and unwarranted giveaways to insurance companies in Medicare and Medicaid. They change incentives so providers will give patients the best care, not just the most expensive care, which will mean big savings over time. And we've urged Congress to include a proposal for a standing commission of doctors and medical experts to oversee cost-savings measures.

I want to be very clear: I will not sign on to any health plan that adds to our deficits over the next decade. And by helping improve quality and efficiency, the reforms we make will help bring our deficits under control in the long term.

Those who oppose reform will also tell you that under our plan, you won't get to choose your doctor, that some bureaucrat will choose for you. That's also not true. Michelle and I don't want anyone telling us who our family's doctor should be, and no one should decide that for you either. Under our proposals, if you like your doctor, you keep your doctor. If you like your current insurance, you keep that insurance. Period. End of story.

Finally, opponents of health reform warn that this is all some big plot for socialized medicine or government-run health care with long lines and rationed care. That's not true either. I don't believe that Government can or should run health care. But I also don't think insurance companies should have free reign to do as they please.

That's why any plan I sign must include an insurance exchange, a one-stop shopping marketplace where you can compare the benefits, costs, and track records of a variety of plans, including a public option to increase competition and keep insurance companies honest, and choose what's best for your family. And that's why we'll put an end to the worst practices of the insurance industry: no more yearly caps or lifetime caps, no more denying people care because of preexisting conditions, and no more dropping people from a plan when they get too sick. No longer will you be without health insurance, even if you lose your job or change your jobs.

The good news is that people who know the system best are rallying to the cause of change. Just this past week, the American Nurses Association, representing millions of nurses across America, and the American Medical Association, representing doctors across our Nation, announced their support because they've seen first hand the need for health insurance reform.

They know we cannot continue to cling to health industry practices that are bankrupting families and undermining American businesses large and small. They know we cannot let special interests and partisan politics stand in the way of reform, not this time around.

The opponents of health insurance reform would have us do nothing. But think about what doing nothing, in the face of ever-increasing costs, will do to you and your family. So today I am urging the House and the Senate, Democrats and Republicans, to seize this opportunity and vote for reform that gives the

American people the best care at the lowest cost, that reins in insurance companies, strengthens businesses, and finally gives families the choices they need and the security they deserve.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3 p.m. on July 17 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on July 18. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 17, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on July 18.

Remarks at the Children's National Medical Center
July 20, 2009

Hello, everybody. Please have a seat. Well, I just first of all want to thank the Children's Hospital for hosting us today, and I want to thank the participants: Joseph Wright, Brian Jacobs, Yewande Johnson, Michael Knappe, Regina Hartridge, and Kathleen Quigley.

I just had the opportunity to talk to doctors, nurses, physician's assistants, and administrators at this extraordinary institution. We spoke about some of the strains on our health care system and some of the strains our health care system places on parents with sick children.

We spoke about the amount of time and money wasted on insurance-driven bureaucracy. We spoke about the growing number of Americans who are uninsured and underinsured. We spoke about what's wrong with a system where women can't always afford maternity care and parents can't afford checkups for their kids and end up seeking treatment in emergency rooms like the ones here at Children's. We spoke about the fact that it's very hard even for families who have health insurance to access primary care physicians and pediatricians. In a city like Washington, DC, you've got all the doctors in one half of the city, very few doctors in the other half of the city. And part of that has to do with just the manner in which reimbursement is taking place and the disincentives for doctors, nurses, and physician's assistants in caring for those who are most in need. And we spoke about where we're headed if we once again delay and defer health insurance reform.

Now, these health care professionals are doing heroic work each and every day to save the lives of America's children. But they're being forced to fight through a system that works better for drug companies and insurance companies than for the American people that all these wonderful health professionals entered their profession to serve.

And over the past decade, premiums have doubled in America, out-of-pocket costs have shot up by a third, deductibles have continued to climb. And yet even as America's families have been battered by spiraling health care costs, health insurance companies and their executives have reaped windfall profits from a broken system.

Now, we've talked this problem to death, year after year. But unless we act—and act now—none of this will change. Just a quick statistic I heard about this hospital: Just a few years ago, there were approximately 50,000 people coming into the emergency room. Now they've got 85,000. There's been almost a doubling of emergency room care in a relatively short span of time, which is putting enormous strains on the system as a whole. That's the status quo, and it's only going to get worse.

If we do nothing, then families will spend more and more of their income for less and less care; the number of people who lose their insurance because they've lost or changed jobs will continue to grow; more children will be denied coverage on account of asthma or a heart condition; jobs will be lost, take-home pay will be lower, businesses will shutter, and we will continue to waste hundreds of billions of dollars on insurance company boondoggles and inefficiencies that add to our financial burdens without making us any healthier.

So the need for reform is urgent and it is indisputable. No one denies that we're on an unsustainable path. We all know there are more efficient ways of doing it. We just—I spoke to the chief information officer here at the hospital, and he talked about some wonderful ways in which we could potentially gather up electronic

medical records and information for every child, not just that comes to this hospital but in the entire region, and how much money could be saved and how the health of these kids could be improved. But it requires an investment.

Now, there are some in these—this town who are content to perpetuate the status quo, are in fact fighting reform on behalf of powerful special interests. There are others who recognize the problem, but believe—or perhaps, hope—that we can put off the hard work of insurance reform for another day, another year, and another decade.

Just the other day, one Republican Senator said, and I'm quoting him now, "If we're able to stop Obama on this, it will be his Waterloo. It will break him." Think about that: This isn't about me; this isn't about politics. This is about a health care system that is breaking America's families, breaking America's businesses, and breaking America's economy.

And we can't afford the politics of delay and defeat when it comes to health care. Not this time—not now. There are too many lives and livelihoods at stake. There are too many families who will be crushed if insurance premiums continue to rise three times as fast as wages. There are too many businesses that will be forced to shed workers, scale back benefits, or drop coverage unless we get spiraling health care costs under control.

The reforms we seek would bring greater competition, choice, savings, and inefficiencies [efficiencies]* to our health care system and greater stability and security to America's families and businesses. For the average American, it will mean lower costs, more options, and coverage you can count on. It will save you and your family money, if we have a more efficient health care system. You won't have to worry about being priced out of the market. You won't have to worry about one illness leading your family into financial ruin. You won't have to worry that you won't be able to afford treatment for a child who gets sick.

We can and we must make all these reforms, and we can do it in a way that does not add to our deficits over the next decade. I've said this before. Let me repeat: The bill I sign must reflect my commitment and the commitment of Congress to slow the growth of health care costs over the long run. That's how we can ensure that health care reforms strengthens our national—our Nation's fiscal health at the same time.

Now, we always knew that passing health care reform wouldn't be easy. We always knew that doing what is right would be hard. There's just a tendency towards inertia in this town. I understand that as well as anybody. But we're a country that chooses the harder right over the easier wrong. That's what we have to do this time. We have to do that once more.

So let's fight our way through the politics of the moment. Let's pass reform by the end of this year. Let's commit ourselves to delivering our country a better future. And that future will be seen in a place like Children's Hospital, when young people are getting the care that they deserve and they need, when they need it, and we don't have an overcrowded emergency room that's putting enormous burdens on this excellent institution. I think we can accomplish that, but we're going to have to do some work over the next few weeks and the next few months.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:25 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Joseph L. Wright, senior vice president, Child Health Advocacy Institute, Brian Jacobs, vice president and chief medical information officer, Yewande J. Johnson, pediatric anesthesiologist, Michael Knapp, executive director, Emergency Medicine Trauma Services, Kathleen Quigley, physician assistant, Division of Neurosurgery, Children's National Medical Center; Regina Hartridge, Children's Health Project of the District of Columbia; and Sen. James W. DeMint.

* White House correction.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Crewmembers of the *Apollo 11* Moon Landing
July 20, 2009

Very rarely do I have such an extraordinary pleasure as I have today to welcome three iconic figures, three genuine American heroes. To have Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins, and Buzz Aldrin here beside me is just wonderful. And I think that all of us recall the moment in which mankind finally was untethered from this planet and was able to explore the stars, the moment in which we had one of our own step on the Moon and leave that imprint that is there to this day. And it's because of the heroism, the calm under pressure, the grace with which these three gentlemen operated, but also the entire NASA family that was able to—at great risk oftentimes, and with great danger—was somehow able to lift our sights, not just here in the United States but around the world.

We now have a wonderful NASA Administrator in Charles Bolden and the Deputy Administrator Lori Garver. We are confident that they are going to be doing everything that they can in the decade to come to continue the inspirational mission of NASA. But I think it's fair to say that the touchstone for excellence in exploration and discovery is always going to be represented by the men of *Apollo 11*.

And so I'm grateful to them for taking the time to visit with us. The country continues to draw inspiration from what you've done. I should note, just personally, I grew up in Hawaii, as many of you know, and I still recall sitting on my grandfather's shoulders when those capsules would land in the middle of the Pacific, and they'd get brought back, and we'd go out, and we'd pretend like they could see us as we were waving at the folks coming home. And I remember waving American flags and my grandfather telling me that the Apollo mission was an example of how Americans can do anything they put their minds to.

I also know that, as a consequence of the extraordinary work of NASA generally, that you inspired an entire generation of scientists and engineers that ended up really sparking the innovation, the drive, the entrepreneurship, the creativity back here on Earth. And I think it's very important for us to constantly remember that NASA was not only about feeding our curiosity, that sense of wonder, but also had extraordinary practical applications. And one of the things that I've committed to doing as President is making sure that math and science are cool again, and that we once again achieve the goal by 2020 of having the highest college graduation rates of any country on Earth, especially in the maths and science fields.

So I think on this 40th anniversary, we are—all of us thankful and grateful to all of you for what you've done, and we expect that there's, as we speak, another generation of kids out there who are looking up at the sky and are going to be the next Armstrong, Collins, and Aldrins. And we want to make sure that NASA is going to be there for them when they want to take their journey.

All right. Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:14 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Neil A. Armstrong, mission commander, Michael Collins, command module pilot, and Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin, Jr., lunar module pilot, *Apollo 11*.

Statement on a Meeting With Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
July 20, 2009

I enjoyed my meeting with President Monson and Elder Oaks. I'm grateful for the genealogical records that they brought with them and am looking forward to reading through the materials with my daughters. It's something our family will treasure for years to come.

NOTE: The statement referred to Thomas S. Monson, president, and Dallin H. Oaks, member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on the United States-India Nuclear Cooperation Approval and Nonproliferation Enhancement Act
July 20, 2009

Dear _____:

I am pleased to transmit to you a report required by section 104(g)of the Henry J. Hyde United States-India Peaceful Atomic Energy Cooperation Act of 2006 (Public Law 109–401), as amended by section 105 of the United States-India Nuclear Cooperation Approval and Nonproliferation Enhancement Act of 2008 (Public Law 110–369).

The report covers the period of October 4, 2008, to June 30, 2009. It provides an update on U.S.-India civil nuclear cooperation and developments that relate to India's nuclear-related activities. Classified information associated with these issues has been provided in a separate classified annex.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John F. Kerry, chairman, and Richard G. Lugar, ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; and Howard L. Berman, chairman, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, ranking member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Remarks on Health Care Reform
July 21, 2009

Defense Spending

Good afternoon, everybody. Before I talk about the progress we're making on health insurance reform, I want to say a few words about a very important vote that just took place in Congress.

Now, long before I took this office, I argued that meeting our greatest challenges would require not only changing policies in Washington but changing the way we do business in Washington. I also promised that part of that change would be eliminating waste and inefficiency in our defense projects, reform that will better protect our Nation, better protect our troops, and save taxpayers tens of billions of dollars.

As Commander in Chief, I will do whatever it takes to defend the American people, which is why we've increased our funding for our military and why we will always give our men and women in uniform the equipment and support that they need to get the job done.

But I reject the notion that we have to waste billions of taxpayer dollars on outdated and unnecessary defense projects to keep this Nation secure. And that's why I've taken steps to greatly reduce no-bid defense contracts. That's why I've signed overwhelmingly bipartisan legislation to limit cost overruns on weapons systems before they spiral out of control. And that's why I'm grateful that the Senate just voted against an additional $1.75 billion to buy F–22 fighter jets that military experts and members of both parties say we do not need.

At a time when we're fighting two wars and facing a serious deficit, this would have been an inexcusable waste of money. Every dollar of

waste in our defense budget is a dollar we can't spend to support our troops, or prepare for future threats, or protect the American people. Our budget is a zero-sum game, and if more money goes to F–22s, it is our troops and our citizens who lose.

So I want to thank Secretary Gates for his outspoken leadership on this issue. I want to thank every Member of Congress who put politics aside to do what's right for the American military and the American taxpayers. And I particularly want to thank Senators Levin and McCain for helping to make this happen.

Now, I've also said that health care costs are the biggest drivers of our deficit. Nobody disputes that. So I'm looking forward to meeting with several Members of Congress who are working to pass health insurance reform that will bring down long-term costs, expand coverage, and provide more choice.

I know that there are those in this town who openly declare their intention to block reform. It's a familiar Washington script that we've seen many times before. These opponents of reform would rather score political points than offer relief to Americans who've seen premiums double and costs grow three times faster than wages. They would maintain a system that works for the insurance and the drug companies, while becoming increasingly unaffordable for families and for businesses.

But there are many others who are working hard to address this growing crisis. I know that there is a tendency in Washington to accentuate the differences instead of underscoring common ground. But make no mistake: We are closer than ever before to the reform that the American people need, and we're going to get the job done. I have urged Congress to act, and the health care reform bills making their way through the respective committees in the House and the Senate reflect a hard-earned consensus about how to move forward. So let me just lay out the substantial common ground in the current bills.

We've agreed that our health reform bill will extend coverage and include unprecedented insurance protections for the American people. Under each of these bills, you won't be denied coverage if you've got a preexisting medical condition. You won't lose your health care if you change jobs, if you lose your job, or if you start a business. And you won't lose your insurance if you get sick.

We've agreed that our health reform bill will promote choice. America—Americans will be able to compare the price and quality of different plans and pick the plan that they want. If you like your current plan, you will be able to keep it. Let me repeat that: If you like your plan, you'll be able to keep it. And each bill provides for a public option that will keep insurance companies honest, ensuring the competition necessary to make coverage affordable.

We've agreed that our health reform bill will emphasize prevention and wellness. By investing in programs that help Americans live healthier lives, we will save money, prevent illness, and increase the competitiveness of our country. We've agreed that our health reform bill will protect American families from financial catastrophe if they get sick. That's why each of these bills has out-of-pocket limits that will help ensure that families don't go bankrupt because of illness. And we have agreed that our health reform bill will include dramatic measures to cut costs while improving quality.

Each of these bills improves oversight while cracking down on waste. Each will help reduce unwarranted giveaways to insurance companies in Medicare. And each of these bills will provide incentives so that patients get the best care, not just the most expensive care.

The consensus that we've forged is not limited to Congress. Indeed, we've forged a level of consensus on health care that has never been reached in the history of this country. Health care providers have agreed to do their part to reduce the road of—the rate of growth in health care spending. The pharmaceutical industry has agreed to spending reductions that will make prescription drugs more affordable for seniors. Hospitals have agreed to bring down costs. The American Nurses Association and the American Medical Association, who represent millions of nurses and doctors who know our health care system best, have announced their support for reform.

So we have traveled long and hard to reach this point. I know that we have further to go.

But I have to say that the American people are absolutely clear that this won't be easy but that the road that we have traveled doesn't just stretch back through the 6 months of my administration, it stretches back year after year, decade after decade, through all the times that Washington has failed to tackle this problem.

Time and again, we've heard excuses to delay and defeat reform. Time and again, the American people have suffered because people in Washington played the politics of the moment instead of putting the interests of the American people first. That's how we ended up with premiums rising three times faster than wages. That's how we ended up with businesses choosing between shedding benefits and shutting their doors. That's how we've been burdened with runaway costs and huge gaps in coverage.

That's the status quo. That's what we have right now. And the American people understand that the status quo is unacceptable. They don't care who's up or who's down politically in Washington; they care about what's going on in their own lives. They don't care about the latest line of political attack; they care about whether their families will be crushed by rising premiums, whether the businesses they work for will have to cut jobs, or whether their children are going to be saddled with debt.

So I understand that some will try to delay action until the special interests can kill it, while others will simply focus on scoring political points. We've done that before. And we can choose to follow that playbook again, and then we'll never get over the goal line, and we'll face an even greater crisis in the years to come. That's one path we can travel.

Or we can come together and insist that this time it will be different. We can choose action over inaction. We can choose progress over the politics of the moment. We can build on the extraordinary common ground that's been forged, and we can do the hard work needed to finally pass the health insurance reform that the American people deserve.

And I can guarantee you that when we do pass this bill, history won't record the demands for endless delay or endless debates in the news cycle, it will record the hard work done by the Members of Congress to pass the bill and the fact that the people who sent us here to Washington insisted upon change. That's the work that we've come here to do, and I look forward to working with Congress in the days ahead to getting the job done.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:50 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Remarks at a White House Event Celebrating Country Music
July 21, 2009

Welcome to the White House. Tonight marks the second in a series of—that we are using to celebrate the music that's contributed to the life of this Nation and chronicled the history of our people. We began this tradition last month with an evening of jazz. And tonight we celebrate another uniquely American art form: country music.

We are thrilled and honored to be joined by three of country music's biggest acts, three of music's biggest acts, period: Alison Krauss and Union Station, Brad Paisley, and Charley Pride. And I want to thank and applaud Alison and Brad for taking some time earlier today to lead a country music workshop here at the White House for the next generation of young musicians.

Now, I know folks think I'm a city boy—[*laughter*]—but I do appreciate listening to country music because like all Americans, I appreciate the broad and indelible impact that country has had on our Nation. It's touched countless lives; it's influenced all genres of music; it's helped us make the American people more hopeful; it's captured our restlessness and resilience, and told so much of our story in the process.

After all, that's what country music is all about: storytelling. It's about folks telling their life story the best way they know how: stories

of love and longing, hope and heartbreak, pride and pain. Stories that help us celebrate the good times and get over the bad times. Stories that are quintessentially American. After all, name me any other country that would have produced a Hank Williams or a Willie Nelson. [*Laughter*]

And like all great art, a great country song also has a commitment to truth, to telling the truth like it is, without pulling any punches. And generations of performers have honored that commitment. Harlan Howard proclaimed country music "three chords and the truth." [*Laughter*] Garth Brooks said it's "honesty, sincerity, and real life to the hilt." And Dierks Bentley called it "the best shrink that 15 bucks can buy." [*Laughter*]

So to all those watching, either here or at home, here's a free session with some of the best storytellers and truthsellers around. We hope that you have a wonderful time this evening. Thank you. Enjoy.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:36 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers Alison Krauss and Union Station, Brad Paisley, Charley Pride, Willie Nelson, Garth Brooks, and Dierks Bentley.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq
July 22, 2009

President Obama. Good afternoon, everybody. I am very pleased to welcome Prime Minister al-Maliki back to Washington. We've just concluded a very productive discussion about a wide range of issues.

We meet at an important moment. Substantial progress has been made since Prime Minister Maliki's first visit to Washington in 2006 and since the Prime Minister and I had a chance to sit down together in Baghdad. Violence continues to be down, and Iraqis are taking responsibility for their future. This progress has been made possible by the resilience of the Iraqi people and security forces and also because of the extraordinary service of American troops and civilians in Iraq.

Now we're in the midst of a full transition to Iraqi responsibility and to a comprehensive partnership between the United States and Iraq based on mutual interests and mutual respect. The success of this transition is critically important to the security and prosperity of our people, and it is a top priority of my administration.

Now, recently, we took an important step forward by transferring control of all Iraqi cities and towns to Iraq's security forces. This transition was part of our security agreement and should send an unmistakable signal that we will keep our commitments with the sovereign Iraqi Government. As I said before, we seek no bases in Iraq, nor do we make any claim on Iraq's territory or resources.

Going forward, we will continue to provide training and support for Iraqi security forces that are capable and nonsectarian. We'll move forward with our strategy to responsibly remove all American combat brigades from Iraq by the end of next August and to fulfill our commitment to remove all American troops from Iraq by the end of 2011.

As we move forward, Prime Minister Maliki and I have no doubt that there will be some tough days ahead. There will be attacks on Iraqi security forces and the American troops supporting them. There are still those in Iraq who would murder innocent men, women, and children. There are still those who want to foment sectarian conflict. But make no mistake: Those efforts will fail.

The Iraqi people have already rejected these forces of division and destruction. And American troops have the capability, the support, and flexibility they need to stand with our Iraqi partners on behalf of a sovereign, secure, and self-reliant Iraq. Because we believe that the future does not belong to those who would destroy; it belongs to those who would build.

To that end, America strongly supports efforts by the Iraqi Government to promote national unity, which will help ensure that people in all parts of Iraq can live in peace and

prosperity. Prime Minister Maliki and I discussed issues like the hydrocarbons law and disputed internal boundaries that will be fundamental to the future of a united Iraq. I reiterated my belief that Iraq will be more secure and more successful if there is a place for all Iraqi citizens to thrive, including all of Iraq's ethnic and religious groups. That's why America continues to support efforts to integrate all Iraqis into Iraq's Government and security forces, and we have increased our assistance to help displaced Iraqis return to their homes.

Prime Minister Maliki and I also agreed to build a broader basis for cooperation between our nations. The United States and Iraq have known difficult times together. Now both of us agree that the bonds forged between Americans and Iraqis in war can pave the way for progress that can be forged in peace. The strategic framework agreement agreed to last year helps lay the groundwork for this progress. America stands ready to help the Iraqi Government build their capacity to provide basic services and to promote the rule of law. And together, Americans and Iraqis can expand economic cooperation and trade that opens new doors of opportunity. Together, we can broaden our educational, our cultural, and scientific engagement to make a positive difference in the lives of our people. And together, we can take steps to advance security and prosperity throughout the region and around the globe. And Prime Minister Maliki and I are both deeply humbled by the sacrifices that have been made by Iraqis and Americans to create this opportunity.

There are many important meetings that will take place over the course of the Prime Minister's visit. I am especially pleased that he intends to visit Arlington National Cemetery. That hallowed ground is the final resting place for so many young Americans who have paid the ultimate price to help forge this hard-earned progress. They've set an example of selfless sacrifice that all of us must strive to meet, as do the Americans serving in Iraq today. And I want to thank Ambassador Chris Hill, who's here and is doing outstanding work. Under the most difficult circumstances imaginable, they have completed every mission they've been given, and they have forged countless partnerships and friendships with the Iraqi people.

I know that this story is one that can be told by people in both our countries and that the Iraqi people have endured extraordinary hardship in their pursuit of a brighter day. So many Iraqis and Americans have made so many sacrifices on behalf of a better future. Now, as we work to end this war and to look beyond it, we must live up to their example and live up to our own responsibilities to see that their legacy is truly one of greater peace and prosperity.

I thank you. And with that, I'd like to welcome Prime Minister Maliki and give him the opportunity for some remarks.

Prime Minister Maliki. In the name of God, the most merciful, the passionate, thank you. I thank the President of the United States, Mr. Obama, for your warm hospitality and regarding all the issues that related to the positive relationship as well as the aspiration to deepen that relationship.

My meeting with the President was a positive and constructive meeting. It reflected the deep conviction on the part of both sides to establish a strategic friendship and in order to continue the successes that we have achieved, and perhaps we referred to the security successes that led to the stability in Iraq.

We have also referred to the sacrifices by our sons and daughters on both sides to confront Al Qaida members, those who are outlawed and those who voice sectarian wars. If they succeeded in their efforts, they would not have been killing only Iraq but the entire region through the danger of sectarianism. Our sons and daughters succeeded both—on both sides, which led to stability and the return of the strength of the Iraqi Government under full sovereignty.

And we can—among the things that we can refer to in a positive way is the positive commitment in following up with the commitments that were signed by both sides, either those are related to the status of forces, or those are related to the strategic framework agreement that will govern the relationship in the future.

I have discussed today with President Obama about ways in order to activate the strategic relationship on the economic front, cultural front, educational front, commercial front, and in every possible area where the United States can play a role in supporting the Iraqi Government and the efforts of the Iraqi Government to build a state of law, a state based on constitution and federalism that works for the aspiration of its own people, using the wealth of that country and that nation.

We are about to activate such a strategic framework agreement. Efforts on both sides are there in order also to convene an investment conference in October of this year that will combine all foreign investors and all companies that would like and wish to work in Iraq.

All of this comes as a natural reaction to the stability and to the direction of the Iraqi National Unity Government to provide what is needed for rebuilding, reconstruction of a country that was destroyed by wars, by dictatorship, and by adventures, affected its infrastructure, affected the services that should have gone to the Iraqi people. Therefore, the relationship between the two sides, as it did see and witness progress on the security front and in combating terror, it will see great cooperation in the areas of economic, commercial, and cultural activities.

Our forces, as it proves its successful role and as it proves when it received the security file, that these forces proved to be capable of performing. And those who thought that the Iraqi forces, if the American forces can leave, will be incapable of imposing peace and security, these people proved to be wrong. Our forces benefited from working closely with the American forces and the multinational forces. Our forces became now highly capable, and they will continue to do their role and their part to provide the opportunity needed for reconstruction, rebuilding, and developing Iraq.

Iraq has suffered a great deal from being marginalized, from the policies of sectarianism, and from wars. We will work very hard in order not to allow any sectarian behavior an opportunity to flourish. We will work on a national plan where all sons of Iraq and all daughters of Iraq are equal in their contribution and in their services. They will be unified by Iraq; they will not be divided by other elements. We will be strengthening the relationship between the people of Iraq.

This is the direction of the Iraqi National Unity Government, and that made us work very closely in meeting all the challenges that we are facing. It helped us on the security front. It will help us in reconstruction. And we will benefit from the strategic relationship with the United States.

Thank you very much.

President Obama. Okay. Mark Smith of AP Radio [Associated Press Radio].

Progress in Iraq/U.S. Role in Iraq

Q. Thanks, Mr. President. I'd like to ask about the flexibility that you spoke about that you said U.S. forces still have in Iraq. Since the handover of control in the cities, the Iraqi Government has imposed new limits on how U.S. troops can operate. They can't patrol on their own; they can't conduct raids on their own. Did you raise this with Prime Minister Maliki? Did you object to this, or do you think this is just a great sign of increasing Iraqi sovereignty?

President Obama. Well, I think that we have seen both improved capacity and greater confidence on the part of the Iraqi security forces. We're very pleased with that. I'm in communications with General Odierno on a regular basis. He provides me a weekly report of how this transition has proceeded. He has been extremely positive about the progress that has been made.

Now, what we've seen is, is that there are going to be, at times, differences in strategy, in the interest of the Iraqi security forces in setting up a checkpoint at some point, and our Armed Forces suggesting that from our experience a checkpoint might create a target for AQI, and so it's better to be more mobile and to go after them. There are going to be those kinds of strategic and tactical discussions that are continually taking place between the two sides. But overall, we have been very encouraged by the progress that's been made.

It doesn't mean that there aren't still dangers in Iraq, and obviously, we've seen that in some circumstances, those who want to sow sectarian

division inside of Iraq are going to still resort to the killing of innocents and the senseless bombings that plagued Iraq for such a long time after Saddam Hussein was deposed.

But what we've seen is, is that the violence levels have remained low, the cooperation between U.S. forces and Iraqi forces has remained high, and we have every confidence that we will continue to work together cooperatively and make adjustments where necessary to assure that, as we move into the national elections, that Iraq continues on the progress of stability and that Iraqi security forces are continually ramping up their capabilities, so that, ultimately, we are going to be able to fulfill our commitment to pull out our troops entirely and interact with Iraq as a full, sovereign country that it is.

Prime Minister Maliki. First of all, excuse me, regarding—the relationship between the Iraqi forces and the Iraqi forces after the withdrawal from cities and towns are good, constant cooperation. There are the support coming from the American forces next to the Iraqi forces that are operating. It is normal that the responsibility is bigger and the role is bigger as a result of the security agreement, but also based on the agreement of the withdrawal.

If the Iraqi forces would require the support from the American forces, they will ask the American side through coordinating committees that organize these operations. And I believe what's happening is organizing the roles between the two sides and cooperation. It is not to marginalize the role of any side. Based on the agreement, we are still under a joint responsibility to face any threats the Iraq is facing.

[*At this point, a reporter asked a question in Arabic.*]

President Obama. My translation is not coming through here, guys, and my Arabic is a little shaky. [*Laughter*] Here we go.

[*The interpreter translated the question into English.*]

Status of Iraq Under United Nations Charter

Q. Based on the agreement, the security agreement between the United States and Iraq, the United States should help Iraq to get out of chapter 7. What steps will you be doing in order to help Iraq to get out of chapter 7?

President Obama. Well, this is an area that Prime Minister Maliki emphasized, and we have made a strong commitment to work with Iraq to get out of the chapter 7 constraints that were imposed after the gulf war. As I stated before, it, I think, would be a mistake for Iraq to continue to be burdened by the sins of a deposed dictator.

Now, in order to do that, we're going to have to obtain cooperation from various members of the United Nations. I think that there are going to have to be some specific disputes that are resolved between Iraq and some of its neighbors. We intend to be very constructive in that process, but we have said clearly, and I've repeated today to the Prime Minister, that we will work diligently with Iraq so that, in fact, Iraq is no longer within chapter 7. Okay?

Prime Minister Maliki. President Obama and the American administration agree with us that Iraq is no longer representing a threat to international peace and security because there is a democracy in Iraq, not a dictatorship. Iraq is looking forward to positive, constructive relationship with its Arab neighbors and with the international community and to deal in—through a law internally and injustice internally.

I have seen a clear commitment from the President and the administration to support Iraq and to be committed to all elements of the agreement and to help Iraq to get out of chapter 7 and international sanctions which were imposed as a result of the ventures and the wars that were led by Saddam's regime, including occupying the neighboring state of Kuwait.

Iraq has gone a long way, and it will continue to solve all problems. And there are so many problems that we are paying the price for from the previous regime in order to have friendly relations with all members of the international community.

President Obama. Okay. Thank you very much, everybody. *Shukran.*

Prime Minister Maliki. Shukran jazeelan. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 3:21 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Christopher R. Hill; and Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq. Prime Minister Maliki and a reporter spoke in Arabic, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Pay-As-You-Go Legislation
July 22, 2009

With this vote, the House of Representatives demonstrated strong support for fiscal discipline. I appreciate the House's quick response to my call for pay-as-you-go (PAYGO) legislation, a central budget-reform priority.

Let me be clear: All new mandatory initiatives and all new tax cuts must be paid for. It is time to stop the practice of passing today's costs onto future generations. PAYGO was a driving principle behind the move from deficit to surplus in the 1990s, and must be so again today.

For several years, the Federal Government was stalled in a pattern of fiscal irresponsibility—no more. We are making tough decisions on funding priorities. We are tackling the biggest threats to our long-term fiscal stability. And we are restoring greater discipline to how we spend taxpayers' dollars.

I thank Speaker Pelosi and Leader Hoyer, Chairman Spratt and Chairman Miller, Representatives Hill, Cooper, Boyd, and Welch, the Blue Dog coalition, and all of the 167 cosponsors of the PAYGO legislation. We will continue to work together to strengthen fiscal discipline. I urge the Senate to approve PAYGO so I can sign this bill into law this year.

The President's News Conference
July 22, 2009

The President. Good evening. Please be seated. Before I take your questions, I want to talk for a few minutes about the progress we're making on health insurance reform and where it fits into our broader economic strategy. Now, 6 months ago, I took office amid the worst recession in half a century. We were losing an average of 700,000 jobs per month, and our financial system was on the verge of collapse.

As a result of the actions we took in those first weeks, we've been able to pull our economy back from the brink. We took steps to stabilize our financial institutions and our housing market. And we passed a Recovery Act that has already saved jobs and created new ones, delivered billions in tax relief to families and small businesses, and extended unemployment insurance and health insurance to those who've been laid off.

Of course, we still have a long way to go, and the Recovery Act will continue to save and create more jobs over the next 2 years, just like it was designed to do. I realize this is little comfort to those Americans who are currently out of work, and I'll be honest with you, new hiring is always one of the last things to bounce back after a recession.

And the fact is, even before this crisis hit, we had an economy that was creating a good deal of wealth for those folks at the very top, but not a lot of good-paying jobs for the rest of America. It's an economy that simply wasn't ready to compete in the 21st century, one where we've been slow to invest in clean energy technologies that have created new jobs and industries in other countries, where we've watched our graduation rates lag behind too much of the world, and where we spend much more on health care than any other nation but aren't any healthier for it. And that's why I've said that even as we rescue this economy from a full-blown crisis, we

must rebuild it stronger than before. And health insurance reform is central to that effort.

This is not just about the 47 million Americans who don't have any health insurance at all. Reform is about every American who has ever feared that they may lose their coverage if they become too sick or lose their job or change their job. It's about every small business that has been forced to lay off employees or cut back on their coverage because it became too expensive. And it's about the fact that the biggest driving force behind our Federal deficit is the skyrocketing cost of Medicare and Medicaid.

So let me be clear: If we do not control these costs, we will not be able to control our deficit. If we do not reform health care, your premiums and out-of-pocket costs will continue to skyrocket. If we don't act, 14,000 Americans will continue to lose their health insurance every single day. These are the consequences of inaction. These are the stakes of the debate that we're having right now.

I realize that with all the charges and criticisms that are being thrown around in Washington, a lot of Americans may be wondering, "What's in this for me? How does my family stand to benefit from health insurance reform?"

So tonight I want to answer those questions. Because even though Congress is still working through a few key issues, we already have rough agreement on the following areas. If you have health insurance, the reform we're proposing will provide you with more security and more stability. It will keep government out of health care decisions, giving you the option to keep your insurance if you're happy with it. It will prevent insurance companies from dropping your coverage if you get too sick. It will give you the security of knowing that if you lose your job, if you move, or if you change your job, you'll still be able to have coverage. It will limit the amount your insurance company can force you to pay for your medical costs out of your own pocket, and it will cover preventive care like checkups and mammograms that save lives and money.

Now, if you don't have health insurance, or you're a small business looking to cover your employees, you'll be able to choose a quality, affordable health plan through a health insurance exchange, a marketplace that promotes choice and competition. And finally, no insurance company will be allowed to deny you coverage because of a preexisting medical condition.

I've also pledged that health insurance reform will not add to our deficit over the next decade, and I mean it. In the past 8 years, we saw the enactment of two tax cuts, primarily for the wealthiest Americans, and a Medicare prescription program, none of which were paid for. And that's partly why I inherited a $1.3 trillion deficit.

That will not happen with health insurance reform. It will be paid for. Already we've estimated that two-thirds of the cost of reform can be paid for by reallocating money that is simply being wasted in Federal health care programs. This includes over $100 billion of unwarranted subsidies that go to insurance companies as part of Medicare, subsidies that do nothing to improve care for our seniors. And I'm pleased that Congress has already embraced these proposals. While they're currently working through proposals to finance the remaining costs, I continue to insist that health reform not be paid for on the backs of middle class families.

In addition to making sure that this plan doesn't add to the deficit in the short term, the bill I sign must also slow the growth of health care costs in the long run. Our proposals would change incentives so that doctors and nurses are free to give patients the best care, just not the most expensive care. That's why the Nation's largest organizations representing doctors and nurses have embraced our plan.

We also want to create an independent group of doctors and medical experts who are empowered to eliminate waste and inefficiency in Medicare on an annual basis, a proposal that could save even more money and ensure long-term financial health for Medicare. Overall, our proposals will improve the quality of care for our seniors and save them thousands

of dollars on prescription drugs, which is why the AARP has endorsed our reform efforts.

Not all of the cost savings measures I just mentioned were contained in Congress's draft legislation, but we're now seeing broad agreement thanks to the work that has done over the last few days. So even though we still have a few issues to work out, what's remarkable at this point is not how far we have left to go, it's how far we've already come.

I understand how easy it is for this town to become consumed in the game of politics, to turn every issue into a running tally of who's up and who's down. I've heard that one Republican strategist told his party that even though they may want to compromise, it's better politics to "go for the kill"; another Republican Senator, that defeating health care reform is about "breaking" me.

So let me be clear: This isn't about me. I have great health insurance, and so does every Member of Congress. This debate is about the letters I read when I sit in the Oval Office every day and the stories I hear at town hall meetings. This is about the woman in Colorado who paid $700 a month to her insurance company only to find out that they wouldn't pay a dime for her cancer treatment, who had to use up her retirement funds to save her own life. This is about the middle class college graduate from Maryland whose health insurance expired when he changed jobs and woke up from the emergency surgery that he required with $10,000 worth of debt. This is about every family, every business, and every taxpayer who continues to shoulder the burden of a problem that Washington has failed to solve for decades.

This debate is not a game for these Americans, and they can't afford to wait any longer for reform. They're counting on us to get this done. They're looking to us for leadership. And we can't let them down. We will pass reform that lowers cost, promotes choice, and provides coverage that every American can count on. And we will do it this year.

With that, I'll take your questions. And we are going to start off with Ben Feller of the Associated Press.

Paying for Health Care Reform

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. You bet.

Q. Congress, as you alluded to, is trying to figure out how to pay for all of this reform. Have you told House and Senate leaders which of their ideas are acceptable to you? If so, are you willing to share that stand of yours with the American people? And if you haven't given that kind of direction to congressional leaders, are you willing to explain why you're not stepping in to get a deal done, since you're the one setting a deadline?

The President. Well, before we talk about how to pay for it, let's talk about what exactly needs to be done. And the reason I want to emphasize this is because there's been a lot of misinformation out there.

Right now premiums for families that have health insurance have doubled over the last 10 years. They've gone up three times faster than wages. So what we know is that if the current trends continue, more and more families are going to lose health care, more and more families are going to be in a position where they keep their health care but it takes a bigger bite out of their budget, employers are going to put more and more of the costs on the employees or they're just going to stop providing health care altogether.

We also know that with health care inflation on the curve that it's on, we are guaranteed to see Medicare and Medicaid basically break the Federal budget. And we know that we're spending on average—we here in the United States are spending about $6,000 more than other advanced countries where they're just as healthy. And I've tried—I've said this before, if you found out that your neighbor had gotten the same car for $6,000 less, you'd want to figure out how to get that deal. And that's what reform is all about: How can we make sure that we are getting the best bang for our health care dollar?

Now, what we did very early on was say two-thirds of the costs of health care reform—which includes providing coverage for people who don't have it, making it more affordable for folks who do, and making sure that we're, over

the long term, creating the kinds of systems where prevention and wellness and information technologies make the system more efficient—that the entire cost of that has to be paid for, and it's got to be deficit neutral. And we identified two-thirds of those costs to be paid for by tax dollars that are already being spent right now.

So taxpayers are already putting this money into the kitty. The problem is they're not getting a good deal for the money they're spending. That takes care of about two-thirds of the cost. The remaining one-third is what the argument has been about of late. What I've said is that there may be a number of different ways to raise money. I put forward what I thought was the best proposal, which was to limit the deductions, the itemized deductions, for the wealthiest Americans. People like myself could take the same percentage deduction that middle class families do, and that would raise sufficient funds for that final one-third.

Now, so far, we haven't seen any of the bills adopt that. There are other ideas that are out there. I continue to think my idea is the best one, but I'm not foreclosing some of these other ideas as the committees are working them through. The one commitment that I've been clear about is I don't want that final one-third of the cost of health care to be completely shouldered on the backs of middle class families who are already struggling in a difficult economy. And so if I see a proposal that is primarily funded through taxing middle class families, I'm going to be opposed to that because I think there are better ideas to do it.

Now, there are—I have not yet seen what the Senate Finance Committee is producing. They've got a number of ideas, but we haven't seen a final draft. The House suggested a surcharge on wealthy Americans, and my understanding, although I haven't seen the final versions, is, is that there's been talk about making that, basically, only apply to families whose joint income is a million dollars.

To me, that meets my principle that it's not being shouldered by families who are already having a tough time, but what I want to do is to see what emerges from these committees, continuing to work to find more savings, because I actually think that it's possible for us to fund even more of this process through identifying waste in the system, try to narrow as much as possible the new revenue that's needed on the front end, and then see how we can piece this thing together in a way that's acceptable to both Democrats and, I hope, some Republicans.

Importance of Health Care Reform

Q. Is it your job to get a deal done?

The President. Absolutely, it's my job. I'm the President. And I think this has to get done. Just a broader point: If somebody told you that there is a plan out there that is guaranteed to double your health care costs over the next 10 years, that's guaranteed to result in more Americans losing their health care, and that is by far the biggest contributor to our Federal deficit, I think most people would be opposed to that. Well, that's the status quo. That's what we have right now.

So if we don't change, we can't expect a different result. And that's why I think this is so important, not only for those families out there who are struggling and who need some protection from abuses in the insurance industry or need some protection from skyrocketing costs, but it's also important for our economy.

And by the way, it's important for families' wages and incomes. One of the things that doesn't get talked about is the fact that when premiums are going up and the costs to employers are going up, that's money that could be going into people's wages and incomes. And over the last decade, we basically saw middle class families—their incomes and wages flatlined. Part of the reason is because health care costs are gobbling that up.

And that's why I say, if we can—even if we don't reduce our health care costs by the $6,000 that we're paying more than any other country on Earth, if we just reduced it by two or three thousand, that would mean money in people's pockets. And that's possible to do. But we're going to have to make some changes. We've got to change how health care is delivered to doctors—the health care delivery system works so that doctors are being paid for the quality of care and not the quantity of care.

We've got to make information technology more effective. We've got to have the medical system work in teams so that people don't go through five different tests. Those are all critical to do, and we can do them.

Now, I understand that people are feeling uncertain about this, they feel anxious, partly because we've just become so cynical about what government can accomplish, that people's attitudes are, you know, even though I don't like this devil, at least I know it, and I like that more than the devil I don't know. So folks are skeptical, and that is entirely legitimate because they haven't seen a lot of laws coming out of Washington lately that help them.

But my hope is, and I'm confident that, when people look at the costs of doing nothing, they're going to say, we can make this happen. We've made big changes before that end up resulting in a better life for the American people.

David Alexander of Reuters.

Timetable for Health Care Reform

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You've been pushing Congress to pass health care reform by August. Why the rush? Are you worried that if you don't—there's a delay until the fall, the whole effort will collapse?

The President. A couple of points: Number one, I'm rushed because I get letters every day from families that are being clobbered by health care costs. And they ask me, "Can you help?" So I've got a middle-aged couple that will write me, and they say, "Our daughter just found out she's got leukemia, and if I don't do something soon, we just either are going to go bankrupt, or we're not going to be able to provide our daughter with the care that she needs." And in a country like ours, that's not right. So that's part of my rush.

The second thing is the fact that if you don't set deadlines in this town, things don't happen. The default position is inertia. Because doing something always creates some people who are unhappy; there's always going to be some interest out there that decides, "You know what? The status quo is working for me a little bit better." And the fact that we have made so much progress, where we've got doctors, nurses, hospitals, even the pharmaceutical industry, AARP, saying that this makes sense to do, I think, means that the stars are aligned, and we need to take advantage of that.

Now, I do think it's important to get this right. And if at the end of the day I do not yet see that we have it right, then I'm not going to sign a bill that, for example, adds to our deficit. I won't sign a bill that doesn't reduce health care inflation so that families, as well as government, are saving money. I'm not going to sign a bill that I don't think will work. And my measure of whether things work or not are listening to the American people but also listening to health care experts who have shown that in some communities, health care is cheaper and delivers a better result. I think we can achieve that.

So I'm confident that if we just keep at it, we keep working, we're diligent, we're honest, if we take criticisms that are out there and modify whatever plans are already working through Congress so that it meets those concerns and those criticisms, that we can arrive at a bill that is going to improve the lives of the American people.

And I'll give you one specific example. I think that there was legitimate concern that we had not incorporated all of the measures that could reduce health care inflation over the long term in some of the versions of health care reform that were coming out of the committee. Well, over the last week, working with not only health care experts but also Members of Congress who are concerned about this, we actually have now gotten a commitment to incorporate an idea that has a panel of doctors and health care experts advising on how we can get a better value for our money in Medicare. And every expert out there says this can be a valuable tool to start reducing inflation over the long term.

So can I say this, though: If we hadn't had any kind of deadline, that change probably would have never surfaced until who knows when. And so I want to do this right, but the American people need some relief.

Chuck Todd [NBC News].

Expanding Health Care Coverage

Q. Thank you, sir. You were just talking in that question about reducing the health care

inflation, reducing costs. Can you explain how you're going to expand coverage? Is it fair to say—is this bill going to cover all 47 million Americans that are uninsured, or is this going to be something—is it going to take a mandate, or is this something that isn't—your bill is probably not going to get it all the way there? And if it's not going to get all the way there, can you say how far is enough—you know, okay, 20 million more, I can sign that; 10 million more, I can't?

The President. I want to cover everybody. Now, the truth is that unless you have a—what's called a single-payer system in which everybody is automatically covered, then you're probably not going to reach every single individual, because there's always going to be somebody out there who thinks they're indestructible and doesn't want to get health care, doesn't bother getting health care, and then, unfortunately, when they get hit by a bus, end up in the emergency room and the rest of us have to pay for it.

But that's not the overwhelming majority of Americans. The overwhelming majority of Americans want health care, but millions of them can't afford it. So the plan that has been—that I've put forward and that what we're seeing in Congress would cover, the estimates are, at least 97 to 98 percent of Americans.

There might still be people left out there who, even though there's an individual mandate, even though they are required to purchase health insurance, might still not get it, or despite a lot of subsidies are still in such dire straits that it's still hard for them to afford it, and we may end up giving them some sort of hardship exemption. But——

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. I'm sorry, go ahead, Chuck.

Q. No, no, no. You can finish.

The President. So I think that the basic idea should be that in this country, if you want health care, you should be able to get affordable health care.

And given the waste that's already in the system right now, if we just redesign certain elements of health care, then we can pay for that. We can pay for it in the short term, but we can also pay for it in the long term. And, in fact, there's going to be a whole lot of savings that we obtain from that because, for example, the average American family is paying thousands of dollars in hidden costs in their insurance premiums to pay for what's called uncompensated care—people who show up at the emergency room because they don't have a primary care physician.

If we can get those people insured, and instead of having a foot amputation because of advanced diabetes they're getting a nutritionist who's working with them to make sure that they are keeping their diet where it needs to be, that's going to save us all money in the long term.

Bipartisan Cooperation

Q. Back to the politics of it. You mentioned two Republicans in your opening statement, but you have 60 Democratic seats, a healthy majority in the House. If you don't get this, isn't this a fight inside the Democratic Party, and that Republicans really aren't playing—you can't really blame the Republicans for this one?

The President. Well, first of all, you haven't seen me out there blaming the Republicans. I've been a little frustrated by some of the misinformation that's been coming out of the Republicans, but that has to do with, as you pointed out, politics. You know, if you've got somebody out there saying not—that—let's get the best bill possible, but instead says, you know, let's try to beat this so we can gain political advantage, well, that's not, I think, what the American people expect.

I am very appreciative that people like Chuck Grassley on the Finance Committee in the Senate, people like Mike Enzi, people like Olympia Snowe, have been serious in engaging Democrats in trying to figure out how do we actually get a system that works. And even in those committees where you didn't see Republican votes, we've seen Republican ideas. So, for example, in the HELP Committee in the Senate, 160 Republican amendments were adopted into that bill because they've got good ideas to contribute.

So the politics may dictate that they don't vote for health care reform because they think, you know, it'll make Obama more vulnerable. But if they've got a good idea, we'll still take it. And in terms of Democrats, the fact of the matter is that because this is a big issue, I think that a lot of Democrats have a lot of different ideas. Some of them have to do with regional disparities. For example, you've got some Democrats who are concerned that the Medicare reimbursement rates in their communities are too low, and so they'd like to see the bill incorporate higher rates for doctors and providers in rural communities to incentivize good care in those communities. That's a legitimate concern. But the minute you bring up that concern, then that adds money, which means that we then have to find additional dollars.

So this is part of just the normal give-and-take of the legislative process. I'm confident at the end we're going to have a bill that Democrats and some Republicans support.

Jake [Jake Tapper, ABC News].

Cost of Health Care Reform

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You said earlier that you wanted to tell the American people what's in it for them, how will their family benefit from health care reform. But experts say that in addition to the benefits that you're pushing, there is going to have to be some sacrifice in order for there to be true cost-cutting measures, such as Americans giving up tests, referrals, choice, end-of-life care. When you describe health care reform, you don't—understandably, you don't talk about the sacrifices that Americans might have to make. Do you think—do you accept the premise that other than some tax increases on the wealthiest Americans, the American people are going to have to give anything up in order for this to happen?

The President. They're going to have to give up paying for things that don't make them healthier. And I—speaking as an American, I think that's the kind of change you want.

Look, if right now hospitals and doctors aren't coordinating enough to have you just take one test when you come in because of an illness, but instead have you take one test, then you go to another specialist; you take a second test, then you go to another specialist, you take a third test, and nobody's bothering to send the first test that you took—same test—to the next doctors, you're wasting money.

You may not see it because if you have health insurance, right now it's just being sent to the insurance company, but that's raising your premiums, it's raising everybody's premiums, and that money, one way or another, is coming out of your pocket, although we are also subsidizing some of that because there are tax breaks for health care. So not only is it costing you money in terms of higher premiums, it's also costing you as a taxpayer.

Now, I want to change that. Every American should want to change that. Why would we want to pay for things that don't work, that aren't making us healthier? And here's what I'm confident about: If doctors and patients have the best information about what works and what doesn't, then they're going to want to pay for what works. If there's a blue pill and a red pill and the blue pill is half the price of the red pill and works just as well, why not pay half price for the thing that's going to make you well?

But the system right now doesn't incentivize that. Those are the changes that are going to be needed—that we're going to need to make inside the system. It will require, I think, patients to—as well as doctors, as well as hospitals—to be more discriminating consumers. But I think that's a good thing, because, ultimately, we can't afford this. I mean, we just can't afford what we're doing right now.

And just to raise a broader issue that I think has colored how we look at health care reform, let me just talk about deficit and debt, because part of what's been happening in this debate is the American people are understandably queasy about the huge deficits and debt that we're facing right now. And the feeling is, all right, we had the bank bailout, we had the recovery package, we had the supplemental, we've got the budget, we're seeing numbers—trillions here and trillions there. And so I think, legitimately, people are saying, look, we're in a recession. I'm cutting back, I'm having to give up things, and yet all I see is government spending more and more money. And that argument, I think, has

been used effectively by people who don't want to change health care to suggest that somehow this is one more government program. So I just want to address that point very quickly.

First of all, let's understand that when I came in, we had a $1.3 trillion deficit, annual deficit, that we had already inherited. Okay? We had to immediately move forward with a stimulus package because the American economy had lost trillions of dollars of wealth. Consumers had lost through their 401(k)s, through their home values, you name it; they had lost trillions of dollars. That all just went away. That was the day I was sworn in; it was already happening. And we had 700,000 jobs that were being lost.

So we felt it was very important to put in place a recovery package that would help stabilize the economy. Then we had to pass a budget, by law. And our budget had a 10-year projection. And I just want everybody to be clear about this: If we had done nothing, if you had the same old budget as opposed to the changes we made in our budget, you'd have a $9.3 trillion deficit over the next 10 years. Because of the changes we've made, it's going to be 7.1 trillion. Now, that's not good, but it's $2.2 trillion less than it would have been if we had the same policies in place when we came in.

So the reason I point this out is to say that the debt and the deficit are deep concerns of mine. I am very worried about Federal spending. And the steps that we've taken so far have reduced Federal spending over the next 10 years by $2.2 trillion. It's not enough. But in order for us to do more, we're not only going to have to eliminate waste in the system—and by the way, we had a big victory yesterday by eliminating a weapons program, the F–22, that the Pentagon had repeatedly said we didn't need. So we're going to have to eliminate waste there, we're going to have to eliminate no-bid contracts, we're going to have to do all kinds of reforms in our budgeting. But we're also going to have to change health care; otherwise, we can't close that $7.1 trillion gap in the way that the American people want it to change.

So to all—everybody who's out there who has been ginned up about this idea that the Obama administration wants to spend and spend and spend, the fact of the matter is, is that we inherited a enormous deficit, enormous long-term debt projections. We have not reduced it as much as we need to and as I'd like to, but health care reform is not going to add to that deficit; it's designed to lower it. That's part of the reason why it's so important to do, and to do now.

Chip Reid [CBS News].

Medicare

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. On Medicare, there are obviously millions of Americans who depend on Medicare. And when you talk about bending the long-term cost downward, or when you talk about cuts in the current proposal on Capitol Hill, you talk about cuts in Medicare, and they talk about cuts in Medicare, but there are never many specifics. Specifically, what kind of pain, what kind of sacrifice, are you calling on beneficiaries to make? And even if not right away, aren't future beneficiaries going to be getting less generous benefits than today's?

The President. No. No.

Q. And a subsidiary question, what do you think about taking it out of the political realm and giving it to an outside body of experts to take the politics out of Medicare?

The President. Well, on the second point, that's exactly what our proposal is. It—called the MedPAC program. By the way, it was originally a Republican idea. I want to give credit where credit is due. The Republican Congress passed a bill that created a panel of health care experts to make recommendations to Congress on how we could get better quality, lower cost. The problem is, every year it would just go on a shelf and nobody would act on it.

So what we've said is let's give that body some power. Let's require Congress to vote on the proposals that they're making every year. Congress can still reject them, so it's not completely removing it from politics, but they have to reject or accept it as a package. And that, I think, would incentivize and empower important changes.

But here's the thing I want to emphasize, Chip. It's not going to reduce Medicare benefits. What it's going to do is to change how those benefits are delivered so that they're more efficient. Let me give you a very specific example. You've heard that as a consequence of our efforts at reform, the pharmaceutical industry has already said they're willing to put $80 billion on the table. Now, why is that? Well, the reason is, is because there's probably even more waste than $80 billion, in terms of how the drug plan in Medicare is administered. We might be able to get 100 billion out or more, but the pharmaceutical industry voluntarily said here's $80 billion.

You know what that translates—what that means? That means that senior citizens who right now have a so-called doughnut hole in their plan, where after spending a certain amount on prescription drugs suddenly they drop off a cliff and they've got to pocket the entire cost, suddenly half of that is filled. That's a hard commitment that we already have. So that's a change in how we are delivering Medicare. But you know what? It turns out that it means out-of-pocket savings for seniors. That's why AARP has endorsed us. Okay.

Christi Parsons [Chicago Tribune].

Transparency in White House Policy

Q. Thank you. During the campaign you promised that health care negotiations would take place on C–SPAN, and that hasn't happened. And your administration recently turned down a request from a watchdog group seeking a list of health care executives who have visited the White House to talk about health care reform. Also, the TARP inspector general recently said that your White House is withholding too much information on the bank bailouts. So my question for you is, are you fulfilling your promise of transparency in the White House?

The President. Well, on the list of health care executives who've visited us, most of the time you guys have been in there taking pictures, so it hasn't been a secret. And my understanding is we just sent a letter out providing a full list of all the executives. But frankly, these have mostly been at least photo sprays where you could see who was participating.

With respect to all the negotiations not being on C–SPAN, you will recall, in this very room, that our kickoff event was here on C–SPAN, and at a certain point, you start getting into all kinds of different meetings—Senate Finance is having a meeting; the House is having a meeting. If they wanted those to be on C–SPAN, then I would welcome it. I don't think there are a lot of secrets going on in there.

And the last question with respect to TARP, I—let me take a look at what exactly they say we have not provided. I think that we've provided much greater transparency than existed prior to our administration coming in. It is a big program. I don't know exactly what's been requested. I'll find out, and I will have an answer for you. Okay?

Julianna [Julianna Goldman, Bloomberg News].

Financial Regulatory Reform

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You've said the recent bank profits indicate that there's been no sense of remorse on Wall Street for risky behavior, that we haven't seen a change in culture there. Would—do you think that your administration needs to be taking a harder line on—with Wall Street? And also, would you consider going a step further than your regulatory reform proposals and supporting a fee on risky activities that go beyond traditional lending?

The President. We were on the verge of a complete financial meltdown. And the reason was because Wall Street took extraordinary risks with other people's money. They were peddling loans that they knew could never be paid back; they were flipping those loans and leveraging those loans, and higher and higher mountains of debt were being built on loans that were fundamentally unsound. And all of us now are paying the price.

Now, I believe it was the right thing to do. As unpopular as it is, it was the right thing for us to do, to step in to make sure that the financial system did not collapse, because things would be even worse today had those steps not been taken. It originated under the Bush administration. We continued it because, whether you're on the left or the right, if you talk to economists, they said that this could have the kinds of

consequences that would have dropped us into a deep depression and not simply a very severe recession.

Now, one of the success stories of the past 6 months is that we really have seen a stabilization in the financial system. It's not where it needs to be, but people are no longer talking about the financial system falling off a cliff. We've stepped away from the brink, and that's important, because what it means is there are a lot of companies right now that can go into the marketplace and borrow money to fund inventory, fund payroll, and that will help the economy grow as a whole.

The problem is, now that the financial system has bounced back, what you're seeing is that banks are starting to make profits again. Some of them have paid back the TARP money that they received, the bank bailout money that they received. And we expect more of them to pay this back. That's a good thing. And we also think it's a good thing that they're profitable again, because if they're profitable, that means that they have reserves in place and they can lend. And this is America, so if you're profitable in the free market system, then you benefit.

But what we haven't seen, I think, is the kind of change in behavior and practices on Wall Street that would ensure that we don't find ourselves in a fix again, where we've got to bail out these folks and—while they're taking huge risks and taking huge bonuses.

So what do I think we need to do? We've got to pass financial regulatory reform. And this is an example of where folks say, "Well, should the Obama administration be taking on too much?" The fact of the matter is that if we don't pass financial regulatory reform, then banks are going to go back to the same things that they were doing before. In some ways, it could be worse, because now they know that the Federal Government may think that they're too big to fail, and so if they're unconstrained, they could take even more risks. And so there are a number of elements of financial regulatory reform.

With respect to compensation, I'd like to think that people would feel a little remorse and feel embarrassed and would not get million-dollar or multimillion-dollar bonuses. But if shame does not work, then I think one proposal that I put forward is to make sure that at least shareholders of these companies know what their executives are being compensated, and that may force some reductions. For banks that are still receiving taxpayer assistance, we have a set of rules that gives us some control on reducing unwarranted compensation.

And in terms of the last point that you made, which is the possibility of fees for transactions that we want to discourage, that is one of the ideas that is going to be working its way through the process. I think at minimum what we want to do is to make sure that to the extent the Federal Government is going to have to be a backstop, just like the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, what everybody is familiar with—FDIC—the reason that when you put your deposits in your bank you can have confidence that they're insured, that's paid for through bank fees. We may need to make sure that there is a similar mechanism in place for some of these other far-out transactions. So if you guys want to do them, then you got to put something into the kitty to make sure that if you screw up, it's not taxpayer dollars that have to pay for it, but it's dollars coming out of your profits.

Steve Koff of the Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Public Health Care Plan

Q. Thank you. To follow up on Jake's question earlier, sir, so many Americans are concerned that this plan, particularly the government insurance, the public option, would lead to reduced benefits or reduced coverage.

Two questions: One, can you guarantee that this legislation will lock in and say the government will never deny any services, that that's going to be decided by the doctor and the patient, and the government will not deny any coverage? And secondarily, can you, as a symbolic gesture, say that you and the Congress will abide by the same benefits in that public option?

The President. Well, number one, not only the public option but the insurance regulation that we want to put in place will largely match

up with what Members of Congress are getting through the Federal employee plan. That's a good example of what we're trying to build for the American people—the same thing that Congress enjoys, which is they go—there is a marketplace of different plans that they can access, depending on what's best for their families.

Now, one of the plans that we've talked about is a public option. And part of the reason we want to have a public option is just to help keep the insurance companies honest. If the insurance companies are providing good care—and as it is, they're going to be more regulated so that they can't deny you care because of a preexisting condition or because you change jobs or because they've decided you're too sick and not a good risk—with regulation, there's already going to be some improvement in the insurance industry.

But having a public plan out there that also shows that maybe if you take some of the profit motive out, maybe if you are reducing some of the administrative costs, that you can get an even better deal, that's going to incentivize the private sector to do even better. And that's a good thing. That's a good thing.

Now, there have been reports just over the last couple of days of insurance companies making record profits right now. At a time when everybody is getting hammered, they're making record profits and premiums are going up. What's the constraint on that? How can you ensure that those costs aren't being passed on to employers or passed on to employees, the American people, ordinary middle class families, in a way that, over time, is going to make them broke? Well, part of the way is to make sure that there's some competition out there. So that's the idea.

Now, to get to your former—your original question, can I guarantee that there are going to be no changes in the health care delivery system? No. The whole point of this is to try to encourage changes that work for the American people and make them healthier. The government already is making some of these decisions. More importantly, insurance companies right now are making those decisions.

And part of what we want to do is to make sure that those decisions are being made by doctors and medical experts based on evidence, based on what works, because that's not how it's working right now. That's not how it's working right now. Right now doctors a lot of times are forced to make decisions based on the fee payment schedule that's out there.

So if they're looking, and you come in and you've got a bad sore throat or your child has a bad sore throat or has repeated sore throats, the doctor may look at the reimbursement system and say to himself, "You know what? I make a lot more money if I take this kid's tonsils out." Now that may be the right thing to do, but I'd rather have that doctor making those decisions just based on whether you really need your kid's tonsils out, or whether it might make more sense just to change—maybe they have allergies, maybe they have something else that would make a difference.

So part of what we want to do is to free doctors, patients, hospitals to make decisions based on what's best for patient care. And that's the whole idea behind Mayo; that's the whole idea behind the Cleveland Clinic. I'm going to be visiting your hometown tomorrow to go to the Cleveland Clinic to show why their system works so well. And part of the reason it works well is because they've set up a system where patient care is the number-one concern, not bureaucracy, what forms have to be filled out, what do we get reimbursed for. Those are changes that I think the American people want to see.

Q. And what about yourself and Congress? Would you abide by the same benefits package?

The President. You know, I would be happy to abide by the same benefit package. I will just be honest with you: I'm the President of the United States, so I've got a doctor following me every minute—[*laughter*]—which is why I say this is not about me. I've got the best health care in the world. I'm trying to make sure that everybody has good health care, and they don't right now.

Lynn Sweet [Chicago Sun-Times].

[*At this point, many reporters spoke at once.*]

The President. Oh. [*Laughter*] Well, I said Steve Koff, but he [Steven Thomma, McClatchy Newspapers] just stood up, huh?

Q. Yes.

The President. Well, that's not fair. [*Laughter*] Shame on you. [*Laughter*] All right, get in there real quick, Steve.

Mayo Clinic and Cleveland Clinic

Q. ——got the Cleveland connection, so I appreciate that. You cited the Mayo Clinic and the Cleveland Clinics as models for the delivery of health care in the past. The Mayo Clinic, though, has some problems with the House proposal, saying they're not focused enough on patients and on results. What do you expect to achieve tomorrow by going to the Cleveland Clinic, which hasn't stated an opinion, and are you expecting some form of endorsement from the Cleveland Clinic?

The President. I am not expecting an endorsement. The Cleveland Clinic is simply a role model for some of the kind of changes that we want to see. I think it's important to note that the Mayo Clinic was initially critical and concerned about whether there were enough changes in the delivery system and cost-saving measures in the original House bill. After they found out that we had put forward very specific mechanisms for this MedPAC idea, this idea of experts getting the politics out of health care and making decisions based on the best evidence out there, they wrote in their blog the very next day that, "We actually think this would make a difference." Okay?

All right, I tried to make that short so that Lynn Sweet would get her last question in.

Race Relations in America

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Recently Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., was arrested at his home in Cambridge. What does that incident say to you, and what does it say about race relations in America?

The President. Well, I should say at the outset that Skip Gates is a friend, so I may be a little biased here. I don't know all the facts. What's been reported, though, is that the guy forgot his keys, jimmied his way to get into the house; there was a report called into the police station that there might be a burglary taking place—so far, so good, right? I mean, if I was trying to jigger into—well, I guess this is my house now so—[*laughter*]—it probably wouldn't happen. But let's say my old house in Chicago—[*laughter*]—here I'd get shot. [*Laughter*]

But so far, so good: They're reporting; the police are doing what they should. There's a call; they go investigate what happens. My understanding is at that point, Professor Gates is already in his house. The police officer comes in, I'm sure there's some exchange of words, but my understanding is, is that Professor Gates then shows his ID to show that this is his house. And at that point, he gets arrested for disorderly conduct, charges which are later dropped.

Now, I don't know, not having been there and not seeing all the facts, what role race played in that, but I think it's fair to say, number one, any of us would be pretty angry; number two, that the Cambridge Police acted stupidly in arresting somebody when there was already proof that they were in their own home; and number three, what I think we know separate and apart from this incident is that there is a long history in this country of African Americans and Latinos being stopped by law enforcement disproportionately. That's just a fact.

As you know, Lynn, when I was in the State legislature in Illinois, we worked on a racial profiling bill because there was indisputable evidence that Blacks and Hispanics were being stopped disproportionately. And that is a sign, an example of how, you know, race remains a factor in this society. That doesn't lessen the incredible progress that has been made. I am standing here as testimony to the progress that's been made.

And yet the fact of the matter is, is that this still haunts us. And even when there are honest misunderstandings, the fact that Blacks and Hispanics are picked up more frequently and oftentime for no cause casts suspicion even when there is good cause. And that's why I think the more that we're working with local

law enforcement to improve policing techniques so that we're eliminating potential bias, the safer everybody is going to be. All right?

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 8:01 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to William Kristol, editor, Weekly Standard; Sen. James W. DeMint; Henry Louis Gates, Jr., director, W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University; and James Crowley, sergeant, City of Cambridge Police Department, MA. A reporter referred to TARP Special Inspector General Neil M. Barofsky. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 23.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Shaker Heights, Ohio
July 23, 2009

The President. Hello, everybody. Hello. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat. Thank you. Hello. Hello, Shaker Heights. Hello, Ohio. It is great to be here. There are a couple of quick acknowledgments I want to make. First of all, please give Rick a big round of applause for his introduction.

Some special guests that we've got: First of all, the Governor of the great State of Ohio, Ted Strickland, is in the house. There he is right there. Your State treasurer, Kevin Boyce, is here. Your secretary of State, Jennifer Brunner, is here. The mayor of the great city of Cleveland, Frank Jackson's here. Shaker Heights Mayor Earl Leiken is here. The Shaker Heights school superintendent, Mark Freeman, is here. Not here, but a couple of my favorite people: Congresswoman Marcia Fudge and Sherrod Brown couldn't be here today. They've got work to do in Washington.

It is good to be back in the great State of Ohio. Now, I know there are those who like to report on the back-and-forth in Washington. But my only concern is the people who sent us to Washington: the families feeling the pain of this recession; the folks I've met across this country who have lost jobs and savings and health insurance but haven't lost hope; the citizens who defied the cynics and the skeptics, who went to the polls to demand real and lasting change. Change was the cause of my campaign; it is the cause of my Presidency.

And when my administration came into office, we were facing the worst economy since the Great Depression. We were losing an average of 700,000 jobs per month. Hundreds of thousands of Ohioans have felt that pain firsthand. Our financial system was on the verge of collapse, meaning families and small businesses couldn't get the credit they need. And experts were warning that there was a serious chance that our economy could slip into a depression. But because of the action we took in those first weeks, we've been able to pull our economy back from the brink. Now that the most immediate danger has passed, there are some who question those steps. So let me report to you exactly what we've done.

We passed a 2-year Recovery Act that meant an immediate tax cut for 95 percent of Americans and small businesses—95 percent. It extended unemployment insurance and health coverage for those who lost their jobs in this recession. It provided emergency assistance to States like Ohio to prevent even deeper layoffs of police officers and firefighters and teachers and other essential personnel. At the same time, we took needed steps to keep the banking system from collapsing, to get credit flowing again, and to help responsible homeowners hurt by falling home prices to stay in their homes.

In the second phase, we're now investing in projects to repair and upgrade roads and bridges, ports and water systems, and in schools and clean energy initiatives throughout Ohio and all across the country. These are projects that are creating good jobs and bring lasting improvements to our communities and our country.

Now, there's no doubt that the steps we've taken have helped stave off a much deeper disaster and even greater job loss. They've saved and helped create jobs and have begun to put the brakes on this devastating recession. But I know that for the millions of Americans who are looking for work, and for those who are struggling in this economy, full recovery can't come soon enough.

I hear from you at town hall meetings like this; I read your letters. The stories I hear are the first thing that I think about in the morning; they're the last thing I think about at night. They're the focus of my attention every waking minute of every day. The simple truth is that it took us years to get into this mess, and it will take more than a few months to dig our way out of it. But I want to promise you this, Ohio: We will get there, and we are doing everything in our power to get our people back to work.

Audience member. We love you, Barack!

The President. I love you back. [*Laughter*]

We also have to do more than just rescue this economy from recession. We need to address the fundamental problems that allowed this crisis to happen in the first place; otherwise, we'd be guilty of the same short-term thinking that got us into this mess. That's what Washington has done for decades. We put things off, and that's what we have to change.

Now is the time to rebuild this economy stronger than before, strong enough to compete in the 21st century, strong enough to avoid the waves of boom and bust that have time and time again unleashed a torrent of misfortune on middle class families across the country. That's why we're building a new energy economy that will unleash the innovative potential of America's entrepreneurs and create millions of new jobs, helping to end our dependence on foreign oil. We're transforming our education system from cradle to college so that this Nation once again has the best educated workforce on the planet. We are pursuing health insurance reform so that every American has access to quality, affordable health coverage.

I want to talk about health care just for a second. I want to be clear: Reform isn't just about the nearly 46 million Americans without health insurance. I realize that with all the charges and the criticism being thrown out there in Washington, many Americans may be wondering, "Well, how does my family or my business stand to benefit from health insurance reform? What's in this for me?" Folks are asking that, so I want to answer those questions briefly.

If you have health insurance, the reform we're proposing will give you more security. You just heard Rick's story. Reform will keep the government out of your health care decisions, giving you the option to keep your coverage if you're happy with it. So don't let folks say that somehow we're going to be forcing Government-run health care; it's just not true. And it will keep the insurance companies out of your health care decisions too, by stopping insurers from cherry-picking who they cover and holding insurers to a higher standard for what they cover.

You won't have to worry about receiving a surprise bill in the mail, because we'll limit the amount your insurance company can force you to pay out of your own pocket. You won't have to worry about preexisting conditions, because never again will anyone in America be denied coverage because of a previous illness or injury. You won't have to worry about losing coverage if you lose or leave your job, because every American who needs insurance will have access to affordable plans through a health insurance exchange, a marketplace where insurance companies will compete to cover you, not to deny you coverage.

And if you run a small business and you're looking to provide insurance for your employees, you'll be able to choose a plan through this exchange as well. I've heard from small-business owners across America trying to do the right thing, but year after year, premiums rise higher and choices grow more limited. And that's certainly true right here in Ohio.

Now, if you're a taxpayer concerned about deficits, I want you to understand I'm concerned about deficits too, because in the 8 years before we came into office, Washington enacted two large tax cuts, primarily for the wealthiest Americans, added a prescription

drug benefit to Medicare, funded two wars, all without paying for it—[*applause*]—didn't pay for it. The national debt doubled. We were handed a $1.3 trillion deficit when we walked in the door, one we necessarily had to add to in the short term to deal with this financial crisis.

Now, I have to tell you, I have to say that folks have a lot of nerve who were—helped us get us into this fiscal hole and then start going around trying to talk about fiscal responsibility. I'm always a little surprised that people don't have a little more shame—[*laughter*]—about having created a mess and then try to point fingers, but that's another topic. [*Laughter*]

Because the truth is, is that I am now President, and I am responsible, and together we have to restore a sense of responsibility in Washington. We have to do what businesses and families do: We've got to cut out the things we don't need to pay for the things we do.

And that's why I've pledged that I will not sign health insurance reform—as badly as I think it's necessary, I won't sign it if that reform adds even one dime to our deficit over the next decade, and I mean what I say.

Now, we have estimated that two-thirds of the cost of reform to bring health care security to every American can actually be paid for by reallocating money that's already in the system but is being wasted in Federal health care programs. So let me repeat what I just said: About two-thirds of health care reform can be paid for not with new revenues, not with tax hikes, not—just with taking money that's not being spent wisely and moving it into things that will actually make people healthier.

And that includes, by the way—right now we spend more than $100 billion in unwarranted subsidies that go to insurance companies as part of Medicare, subsidies that do nothing to improve care for our seniors. We ought to take that money and use it to actually treat people and cover people, not to line pockets of insurers. And I'm pleased that Congress has already embraced these proposals. And while they're currently working through proposals to finance the remaining costs, I continue to insist that health care reform not be paid for on the backs of middle class families.

Now, into—in addition to making sure that this plan doesn't add to the deficit in the short term, the bill I sign must also slow the growth of health care costs, while improving care in the long run. I just came from the Cleveland Clinic, where I toured the cardiac surgery unit, met some of the doctors who are achieving incredible results for their patients. There's important work being done there, as well as at the University Hospitals and MetroHealth.

And Cleveland Clinic has one of the best health information technology systems in the country. And that means they can track patients and their progress. It means that they can see what treatments work and what treatments are unnecessary. It means they can provide better care for patients. They don't have to duplicate test after test because it's all online. They can help patients manage chronic diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure and asthma and emphysema by coordinating with doctors and nurses both in the hospital and in the community.

And here's the remarkable thing: They actually have some of the lowest costs for the best care. That's the interesting thing about our health care system. Often, the—better care produces lower, not higher, expenses, because better care leads to fewer errors that cost money and lives. You, or your doctor, don't have to fill out the same form a dozen times. Medical professionals are free to treat people, not just illnesses. And patients are provided preventive care earlier, like mammograms and physicals, to avert more expensive and invasive treatment later.

That's why our proposals include a variety of reforms that would save both money and improve care and why the Nation's largest organizations representing doctors and nurses have embraced our plan. Our proposals would change incentives so that doctors and nurses finally are free to give patients the best care, not just the most expensive care. And we also want to create an independent group of doctors and medical experts who are empowered to eliminate waste and inefficiency in Medicare, a proposal that could save even more money.

So overall, our proposals will improve the quality of care for our seniors, save them

thousands of dollars on prescription drugs, and that, by the way, is why AARP has endorsed our reform efforts as well. So the fact is, lowering costs is essential for families and businesses here in Ohio and all across the country. Just to take the Ohio example, over the past few years, premiums have risen nearly nine times faster than wages. That's something that Rick and his wife understand very well. As we meet today, we're seeing double-digit rate increases on insurance premiums all over America. There are reports of insurers raising rates by 28 percent in California, seeking a 23-percent increase in Connecticut, proposing as much as a 56-percent increase in Michigan. If we don't act, these premium hikes will just be a preview of coming attractions. And that's a future you can't afford; that is a future that America can't afford.

We spend one of every 6 of our dollars on health care in America, and that's on track to double in the next three decades. The biggest driving force behind our Federal deficit is the skyrocketing cost of Medicare and Medicaid. Small businesses struggle to cover workers while competing with large businesses. Large businesses struggle to cover workers while competing in the global economy. And we'll never know the full cost of the dreams put on hold, the entrepreneurial ideas that are allowed to languish, the small businesses never founded because of the fear of being without insurance or having to pay for a policy on your own.

So, Ohio, that's why we seek reform. And in pursuit of this reform, we've forged a consensus that has never before been reached in the history of this country. Senators and Representatives in five committees are working on legislation; three have already produced a bill. Health care providers have agreed to do their part to reduce the rate of growth in health care spending. Hospitals have agreed to bring down costs. The drug companies have agreed to make prescription drugs more affordable for seniors. The American Nurses Association, the American Medical Association, representing millions of nurses and doctors who know our health care system best, they've announced their support for reform.

So we have never been closer to achieving quality, affordable health care for all Americans. But at the same time, there are those who would seek to delay and defeat reform.

[*At this point, a loud noise was heard.*]

Is that the air conditioning? [*Laughter*] That's good. It's a little warm. You can still hear me, though.

Audience members. Yes.

The President. You know, we had one Republican strategist who told his party that even though they may want to compromise, it's better politics to go for the kill. Another Republican Senator said that defeating health care reform is about breaking me, when it's really the American people who are being broken by rising health care costs and declining coverage. You know, the Republican Party chair, seeking to stall our efforts, recently went so far as to say that health insurance reform was happening too soon.

Well, first of all, let me just be clear: If there's not a deadline in Washington, nothing happens. Nothing ever happens. And, you know, we just heard today that, well, we may not be able to get the bill out of the Senate by the end of August—or the beginning of August. That's okay. I just want people to keep on working; just keep working. I want the bill to get out of the committees, and then I want that bill to go to the floor, and then I want that bill to be reconciled between the House and the Senate, and then I want to sign a bill. And I want it done by the end of this year. I want it done by the fall.

Whenever I hear people say that it's happening too soon, I think that's a little odd. We've been talking about health care reform since the days of Harry Truman. [*Laughter*] How could it be too soon? I don't think it's too soon for the families who've seen their premiums rise faster than wages year after year. It's not too soon for the businesses forced to drop coverage or shed workers because of mounting health care expenses. It's not too soon for taxpayers asked to close widening deficits that stem from rising health care costs, costs that threaten to leave our children with a mountain of debt. Reform may be coming too soon for

some in Washington, but it's not soon enough for the American people. We can get this done. We don't shirk from a challenge. We can get this done.

People keep on saying, "Wow, this is really hard. Why are you taking it on?" You know, America doesn't shirk from a challenge. We were reminded of that earlier this week when Americans and people all over the world marked the 40th anniversary of the moment that the astronauts of the *Apollo 11* walked on the surface of the Moon. It was the realization of a goal President Kennedy had set nearly a decade earlier. Ten years earlier, he'd said we're going to the Moon. And there were times where people said, "Oh, this is foolish; this is impossible." But President Kennedy understood and the American people set about proving what this Nation is capable of doing when we set our minds to do it.

And there are those now who are seeing our failure to address stubborn problems as a sign that our best days are behind us; that somehow we've lost our sense of purpose and toughness and capacity to lead; that we can't do big things anymore. Well, I believe that this generation like generations past stand ready to defy the skeptics and the naysayers, that we can once again summon this American spirit. We can rescue our economy. We can rebuild it stronger than before. We can achieve quality, affordable health care for every single American. That's what we're called upon to do. That's what we will do with your help, Ohio—with your help.

All right, thank you.

All right. All right, this is the fun part where we get to ask questions. I'm going to take off my jacket, guys, so if you want to do the same thing; it's a little hot. All right. Now, here's how this is going to work. There are really no rules. We haven't asked—you know, there's no preprogrammed questions. All you have to do is—first of all, everybody should sit down. [*Laughter*]

The second thing is, I'm just going to call on as many people as we can during the time that we have, and I'm going to—just to make sure it's fair, I'm going to call on girl, boy, girl, boy. [*Laughter*] So just raise your hand if you've got a question. Try to keep the question relatively brief; I'll try to keep my answer relatively brief, and we'll try to get through as many as we can. And introduce yourself, if you don't mind. There are people in the audience with mikes and so if you can wait for the microphone so you can introduce yourself and then ask the question so that everybody can hear you. Okay?

All right. This young lady right there in the colorful blouse right there. That's you, colorful dress.

Medicare

Q. Hello?

The President. Hello.

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. Thank you for taking my question. My name is Norma Goodman. My question regarding health care is twofold. It appears that your plan has the health care industry funding your health care reform, and I think you just alluded to that a little. It poses a concern for me. I'm the owner of a Medicare-certified home care agency. And by the way, my agency wanted to invite you to come on a home visit with us. [*Laughter*] But your proposed budget includes drastic cuts to reimbursement. I feel that that threatens the—you're shaking your head no?

The President. Yes. I don't think so. I should point out, if I'm not mistaken, that the home care industry has actually endorsed this reform effort and are moving forward, but go ahead and finish your question.

Q. Well, that is my concern, that your budget proposal has lined up, I—from MedPAC's recommendations, cuts for the next several years that will amount to, I don't know, 13 billion or something like that over the next few years. So——

The President. Okay, well, let me just respond. The MedPAC idea is to have health care experts and doctors sit down and figure out how can we improve Medicare, how can we make it more cost-efficient. It is not an exercise in just cutting reimbursement rates. In fact, in some cases, we may need higher reimbursement rates for certain aspects. I actually think home care ends up being cost efficient in many cases——

Q. Thank you.

The President. ——rather than institutional care, and it helps keep people in their homes. In rural communities, there are certain areas

where doctors aren't reimbursed at an adequate level, and so you're seeing too many doctors leave those communities.

Q. Right.

The President. So what we do want to make sure of, though, is that we are, in our reimbursement systems, we're incentivizing smart things. So, for example, right now if a hospital is reimbursed for the number of tests that it does, then that may not give them much of an incentive to make their system more efficient so that once you take that first test, and you've gone in the hospital, then you end up having that test sent around to everybody so you don't have to take five more tests. But right now the way the reimbursement system is set up, you don't have that incentive to just have the one test and then use information technology to distribute it throughout the system.

So those are the kinds of changes that we want to make. We think that the more that we're encouraging efficient, smart care, that's going to be good for providers; that's going to be good for patients; that actually frees up more money so that we, in some cases, can provide higher reimbursements for folks who right now are not getting sufficient reimbursement. It's a matter of using the dollars that we're spending more wisely than we're spending them right now. Okay? All right.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Thank you.

Gentleman in the red right there.

Congressional Progress on Health Care Reform

Q. Well, first, Mr. President, welcome to Shaker Heights.

The President. Thank you.

Q. The city that makes things work. My question and maybe my request is this: Are you willing to urge Senator Reid and Speaker Pelosi to stay in Washington and get this job done?

The President. Well, I tell you what, I think Senator Reid said today that he thought that we can get this bill out of the Senate Finance Committee by the time of recess, and that in early fall, they will come back and actually vote on the bill. Now, I haven't talked to him today.

My attitude is, I want to get it right, but I also want to get it done promptly. And so as long as I see folks working diligently and consistently, then I am comfortable with moving a process forward that builds as much consensus as possible. What I don't want is what I referred to in my speech: delay for the sake of delay. Delay because people are worried about making tough decisions or casting tough votes, that's what I don't want to see.

So if people are legitimately working out tough problems—and some of these problems are tough. I mean, this is a big system, and it's complicated. So I have no problem if I think people are really working through these difficult issues and making sure that we get it right. But I don't want to delay just because of politics. And I have to tell you, sometimes delays in Washington occur because people just don't want to do anything that they think might be controversial.

And you know what? That's not how America has made progress in the past. Medicare was controversial; Social Security was controversial. People accused Franklin Delano Roosevelt of being a socialist because he wanted to set up a system to make seniors a little more secure. Going to the Moon was controversial. But at some point, if we're going to move this country forward, we can't be afraid to change, especially a system that we know is broken. We've got to get it done, and we've got to get it done soon.

All right. This young—that lady right there who's waving at me. [*Laughter*]

Medicare Prescription Drug Benefits

Q. Thank you very much. My name is Semanthie Brooks, and I'm the director of community advocacy for the Benjamin Rose Institute in Cleveland.

The President. Okay.

Q. I also represent a group called Senior Voice, and we, by the way, sent over 4,000 signatures to our congressional Members asking their support of Medicare. And so my question is about Medicare and the doughnut hole in particular. We know that about 3.4 million seniors will fall into the doughnut hole on an annual basis. This represents about one in four

seniors that will participate in the Part D program. When seniors fall into the doughnut hole, they then have to make choices about whether or not they take their medications. They break their pills in half; they make a decision about buying medication or purchasing food. My question to you, Mr. President, is that, will you support the legislation that is currently being introduced in the House to close the doughnut hole over the next several years?

The President. Well, I'm going to do more than that for you. In our health care reform proposal, we have already extracted concessions from the pharmaceutical industry that we know will right away close half of that doughnut hole. They've already put $80 billion on the table. That's part of the reason AARP endorsed the bill.

Now, by the way, for those of you who don't know what the doughnut hole is, the way the Medicare prescription drug plan works is that it helps you pay for your prescription drugs until you hit a certain ceiling, a certain level of several thousand dollars, and then suddenly, the subsidies, the help from the Federal Government just go away, and you've got to pay out-of-pocket expenses of several more thousands of dollars until you get to the point where help kicks in again. So that's why they call it the doughnut hole, because there's a hole right in the middle where you don't get any help, and it costs seniors thousands of dollars.

One of the things that we can do through reform is to make sure that we are moving to close that doughnut hole. That's a commitment that will be contained in this health care reform bill that we get passed.

All right. This young man right here. We'll get a young guy in here.

Public Support for Health Care Reform

Q. Hi, Mr. President. My name is Brooks Boron. I am going to be a junior in high school. My question is, for a student, how can we help get this reform passed?

The President. Well, I appreciate that; I like that. Well, first of all, I very much appreciate that as a junior in high school you're still thinking about—you're already thinking about this, because usually young people, they think they're indestructible so they don't need health care. [*Laughter*] And in fact, a high proportion of the uninsured are actually young people, particularly right after they graduate from college; they haven't gotten a job yet that provides health care, and they are very vulnerable if, heaven forbid, something happens to them.

There have been a couple of ideas that we've talked about, for example, extending the insurance of parents, making insurance companies provide—keep kids on their insurance until they're 25. That would help a lot. But the question you asked was how can you help get it done. Number one, make sure you're persuading your parents if they're not already convinced. But mom is right there, so she's already on board. [*Laughter*]

I think that activism right now, in calling your Congress people, calling your Senators, making sure they know this is important, that's something that everybody here needs to do because, frankly, they are hearing from the other side. All those folks who are out there saying, we can't afford this; this is socialism; this will lead to government-run health care—all the folks who are getting ginned up on talk radio and some of these cable news shows, I have to say that they have an effect on Members of Congress. It makes Members of Congress nervous. So they need to hear from folks who are saying in a very common-sense way, this is something we can do.

It's going to be paid for. It is not going to add to the deficit. It will, in fact, control the deficit over the long term. And young people should particularly be concerned about that, because if health care inflation keeps going up at the rate that it is, you won't—when your generation is running things, won't be able to afford anything else in the Federal budget. Medicare and Medicaid will consume all our health care dollars—or all our Federal dollars. That's a huge problem.

But the last thing I just want to emphasize to people, when you contact your Senators, when you contact your Members of Congress, make sure to make this a personal testimony. Tell your story about why you're concerned. Because sometimes these debates get so abstract, and I have to remind people—you know, I get a

story about a woman who contracts cancer, and suddenly not only is she worrying about her cancer, but she's also worrying about the $100,000 worth of unpaid medical bills that she's having to deal with and her family can't afford.

I hear from people who say, "I've always worked hard; I've always done well; I've got a good job. I left my job to start my business. Suddenly I find out I can't get health insurance because of a preexisting condition. And so I'm going to have to close up my business, and I'm going to have to go back to doing something where I can get health insurance."

I mean, those stories, everybody knows them. And one of the things that I emphasized yesterday that people, I think, don't maybe think about enough is if all that money is being eaten up in premiums, even if your employer is paying for them, guess what? That means that employer has got less money to give you a raise. So you wonder why, for the last 10 years, wages and incomes have been flat. If you look, on average, people haven't gotten a raise. Why is that? Well, part of it is because it's all been taken up in increased health care costs, even if the companies are profitable.

And, you know, the group that actually understands this best is folks who are members of unions because—and the reason is—what happens? You guys go into negotiations, and your employer, even if they're well meaning, even if they want to cooperate with the union, they say, "Look, guys, I can't afford to give you a raise right—I can't afford to raise the hourly wage because look at what's happened to my health care rates." And your whole negotiation ends up being how much more of a health care burden are you going to have to carry when you thought those benefits were already locked in.

So that's why health care reform is so important even if you've got health insurance, because it is taking money out of your pocket, and it's leaving a lot of people in very dire straits. So all right? Okay.

This young lady right here. Here—there's a gentleman who is coming with a microphone.

Taxing Health Care Benefits

Q. Hello, Mr. President. I'm Dr. Diana Lee Macron, and I have a question. The Republicans and some Democrats want to tax health care benefits. Using one of the local Council of Smaller Enterprise plans, an individual male would pay $1,500 at the age of 24, $5,200 at age 50, and almost $10,000 at age 60 for the same plan. For a female employee, it would cost $3,300 at age 24 and $6,400 at age 50. Family plans are more.

A tax credit can only benefit those who make enough money to use a tax credit. Most people don't need a tax credit. How would you make the taxing of benefits equitable to older and female workers?

The President. Well, let me—just to make sure I understand your question—or I'll try to answer what I think your question was. First of all, in terms of taxing benefits, I said I oppose the taxing of health care benefits that people are already receiving, so that's not a proposal that I'm supportive of.

There is being discussed in the Senate Finance Committee the fact that some folks have Cadillac plans, meaning—let's—just to give you an example, the average Member of Congress's plan, I think, is somewhere—it's either 13,000 or 17,000 or 14,000; it's somewhere in that range. So that's a pretty good plan. That's what Members of Congress get.

Now, what the Senate Finance Committee has been saying is maybe when you get to a $25,000 plan—so one that's a lot more expensive and a lot fancier than the one that even Members of Congress get—maybe at that point what you should do is you should sort of cap the exclusion, the tax deduction, that is available so that we're discouraging these really fancy plans that end up driving up costs. That's the debate that's been taking place, and I think that is at least—I haven't signed on to that approach, but I think it's a legitimate debate to have.

But what I said, and I've taken off the table, would be the idea that you just described, which would be that you would actually provide—you would eliminate the tax deduction that employers get for providing you with

health insurance, because, frankly, a lot of employers then would stop providing health care, and we'd probably see more people lose their health insurance than currently have it. And that's not obviously our objective in reform. Okay?

All right, let's see, this young man right here. He's got a bowtie on; he looks very sharp. [*Laughter*] Here, you can use my mike.

Health Insurance for Young Adults

Q. Hi, I'm Brandon Patterson, and I'm Shaker Heights senior class president. And I want to say, on behalf of the entire—[*inaudible*]—but my question is—she kind of touched on it earlier, and you kind of said that you're going to, with the health care, extend the age where we can stay on our parents' health care. But we see that many States have passed reforms where they extended the age to 26 and 30 are still—[*inaudible*]—that we, at 19 to 29, that we still are the main—the largest percent of people who do not have health insurance. So my question to you is actually, how can we be guaranteed?

The President. Well, keep in mind that one way of dealing with this is having health insurance reform so that young people are covered under their parents' plan while they're in that transition period from college to a job.

But anybody under the plan that we've proposed—and actually we're seeing consensus in Congress about—anybody would be eligible to go ahead and get health insurance through what we're calling this exchange with subsidies, with help from the Federal Government if you can't afford it, so that you'd still be able to get health insurance even if you're 20 or 21 or 22, as long as you are eligible financially. I mean, if you're LeBron James—I love LeBron, but he doesn't need a subsidy from the Federal Government for health insurance. [*Laughter*]

But assuming you're—you qualify in terms of income, where you're a working person who's not making a lot of money, doesn't get health insurance on the job, regardless of age, you would then be eligible to go ahead and buy health insurance through this exchange. That's the whole idea, is that we're creating a system where anybody who doesn't have health insurance is able to go and look up and see these choices.

By the way, this exchange has a lot of private plan options in it, if that's what you prefer. And you could choose the plan that you think works best for you, and we would then help you be able to purchase that insurance. And any insurer who was in the exchange would have to abide by certain rules, like you can't exclude people for preexisting conditions; like they can't just drop you if they decide that you get too sick; you can't lose your insurance just because you change jobs. Right? So we would be reforming the insurance industry, and you would be able to get access for insurance that you could count on over the long term.

All right? Okay. It's a young lady's turn. Let's see, I've sort of neglected, I think, way up there. All right, that young lady standing up right there. No, no, no, I'm sorry, I know you're excited, but I was pointing at her right there. [*Laughter*] But I love you too, though. [*Laughter*] Okay, right there. Yes. No, right there. Yes.

Q. Me?

The President. You, yes.

Mental Health Services/Wellness and Prevention Programs

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. My name is Aimee Vance. I'm an RN that works for the Cleveland Clinic and Community Outreach. We serve the uninsured and are doing some great things there. This is Connie Robinson; she's a counselor also that works with me. [*Laughter*] My question is, in the health care reform bill that you are putting together, are there going to be provisions for insurance companies to get paid for providing health education and health promotion type of things for their people as well as more help with mental health services, because it's a huge deficit?

The President. Well, I've long been a supporter of mental health services as part of a package, and I think that's important, but I really want to focus on, in addition, what you just mentioned, which is issues of prevention and wellness. This can make such a huge difference. And you know, I was meeting with some of the officers here at the Cleveland Clinic; they're all

sitting up front here, very serious guys. [*Laughter*] They do outstanding work.

One of the things that's exciting, though, in addition to the big fancy hospital with all the fancy equipment, they've also—are linked up with all these family clinics all throughout the area. And one of the things that a clinic and a family physician can do is to focus on preventable diseases, making sure that you are helping somebody with a nutritionist to keep their weight down before they get diabetes as opposed to, you know, paying for a surgery for a foot amputation. If they already have diabetes, then having a counselor who's working with them monthly to make sure that they are maintaining the regimens to keep their diabetes under control, that is cost efficient.

But the problem is, right now, that a lot of the health system doesn't reimburse and incentivize that kind of preventive work and that wellness work. And so what we want to do is, absolutely, in this reform package, there will be reimbursements for and incentives for prevention and wellness. And we're going to make sure that those are the things that don't require out-of-pocket costs for the patient so that they're not being discouraged from using it, but rather they're being encouraged from using it. That will make all the difference in the world.

All right. How much time we have? Okay, I've got time. I'm sorry, guys; I only have time for one more question. One more question. And I've got to say, I apologize, guys, but I'm going to go with another young person here, this young man right there, who's got a jacket on, so he's looking very sharp. [*Laughter*] Thanks for dressing up, guys. You got the bowtie; you got the jacket. I didn't dress that good when I was their age. [*Laughter*]

Importance of Health Care Reform

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. My name is Parker Smith. I'm 14 years old; I'm going to be a freshman here.

The President. Okay, Parker.

Q. All right. How can you reassure many Americans around the country that your health care proposal isn't too much, too fast?

The President. Well, I think that's a great question. That's a great question. First of all, I do think that sometimes people get the idea—you know, I had said, let's get this done by August. Now, what I was referring to is let's get bills voted out of the House and the Senate by August. That still means that we'd have to come back in the fall; we'd have to reconcile the differences between the Senate bill and the House bill, have a new bill; it would go back to the Senate and the House again to be voted on; then finally come to my desk. Our target date is to get this done by the fall; that's the bottom line. But keep in mind that even if we got it done in the fall, most of these changes would be phased in over several years. So it's not as if you're going to wake up tomorrow and suddenly the health care system is all changed completely. We are going to phase this in, in an intelligent, deliberate way.

But there are some changes that I think have to take effect pretty quick. For example, making sure that we're reducing prescription drug for seniors; we shouldn't have to wait a long time to get that done. We shouldn't have to wait a long time to make sure that people don't lose their insurance because of a preexisting condition. There are some things that I think that we can start implementing where there's a pretty broad consensus it needs to get done.

Now, is it too much? I don't think it's too much. It's only too much by the standards of Washington politics today, which is basically that anything just becomes this big tangle of who's up and who's down and who's advantaged and who's not, and the special interests and the lobbyists are all scurrying around. By that standard—I know I'm working people pretty hard up on Capitol Hill, but you know what? This is not too much.

What we're talking about is not completely scrapping the existing health care system. All we're saying is if you've got health insurance, you can keep it. If you don't have health insurance, you can now afford to buy it with some help. If you have health insurance, we're going to reform the insurance industry so that it can still make a profit, it can still offer good services to its patients—or to its customers; it just

can't engage in some of these rules that basically have them collecting a lot of premiums but not wanting to pay out when people really need it and when people get sick. So—and what we want to do—now, here's what is complicated, is changing the delivery systems so that we actually start getting more quality for less money. That's going to take some time. It's not going to happen overnight.

The reason I visited the Cleveland Clinic is because along with the Mayo Clinic, they have been able to drive down costs more than any other health care system out there, while maintaining some of the highest quality. Now, when I asked, "How did you go about doing it?" Well, they started this thing—when was it started, Cleveland Clinic—1921—and they—what they've done is, for example, doctors who are part of the Cleveland Clinic get paid a salary instead of being paid fee-for-service. So that makes it easier for them to make some of these changes, because people don't feel like maybe they're losing some money out of pocket; they just know that they're getting a salary.

Now, that's not maybe the thing that every doctor is going to want to do. But there are other ways that we can take that same approach, where they start thinking in terms of what's needed for the patient and making sure that they're getting reimbursed for what's good for the patient. And they don't then have to worry about what's the government saying, or what's the insurance company saying: "Am I going to get reimbursed for this? Am I not going to get reimbursed for this? Do I have to fill out 15,000 forms?"

I've said before, most people who are doctors or nurses, they didn't get into it to fill out forms; they got into it to make people feel better, to heal the sick. And that's what we want to free them up to do, but it will take a little time to get there.

So all right, everybody, stay on your Members of Congress. Keep up the heat. We've got to get this done. Thank you. Love you. Bye.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:31 p.m. at Shaker Heights High School. In his remarks, he referred to Rick Vacha, member, Local 507, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, who introduced the President, and his wife Claudia; William Kristol, editor, Weekly Standard; Sen. James W. DeMint; Michael S. Steele, chairman, Republican National Committee; and LeBron James, forward, National Basketball Association's Cleveland Cavilers.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Chicago, Illinois
July 23, 2009

The President. Hello, Chicago. It is good to be home. We got Connie Howard in the house. Who else we got here? Let's see, we got the Governor, Pat Quinn is here. My old friend Senate President John Cullerton is here. The comptroller of the State, Dan Hynes, is here. Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias is here. Where's Alexi? He's around here somewhere. And a great friend, somebody who helped look after me while I was down in the State senate, former president of the senate, Emil Jones, is here. Give Emil a big round of applause. Thank you.

It is good to see everybody. It's good to be home. I miss you all; I love you all. I wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for the support and love that this city has given our family over the years, so thank you.

And I have to say, I guess today everybody is a White Sox fan. I was up on the north side and all these Cubs fans were all like, "What about Buehrle?" I said, that's right. That was extraordinary. I told—I spoke to Buehrle on the phone, on the Air Force One. That's one of the privileges of Presidency. [*Laughter*] See, you can call up a guy after he pitches a perfect game. And I told him that he had to buy a big steak dinner for that centerfielder, Wise, because he saved that perfect game. That was exciting. Somebody just asked me what's more exciting, that or the Dow going over 9,000? And I said—I promise you—a perfect game, now that's big. That is big.

It has now been 6 months since Michelle and Sasha and Malia and Marian Robinson, my mother-in-law, said goodbye and moved into a

nice little spot in Washington, DC. [*Laughter*] And we arrived there at an incredibly difficult moment in this country's history. It was a time when we faced the worst recession in half a century. We were losing an average of 700,000 jobs per month. Our financial system was on the verge of collapse. And because the folks running Washington got in the habit of spending money they didn't have, we inherited a deficit of $1.3 trillion.

That's what we faced when I took office in January. But because of the actions that we took in those first weeks, we've been able to pull the economy back from the brink. We still have a long way to go, but the Recovery Act we passed has already saved jobs and created new ones, delivered billions in tax relief to families and small businesses, extended unemployment insurance and health insurance to those who have been laid off.

This plan will continue to save and create more jobs over the next 2 years, just like it was designed to do. I realize this is little comfort to those Americans who are currently out of work, and I'll be honest with you, new hiring is usually the last thing to come back after such a severe recession.

But here's the thing to remember: Even before the crisis hit, Chicago, we had an economy that was not doing everything it needed to be doing. It was not firing on all cylinders. It was good at creating a great deal of wealth for folks at the very top but not a lot of good-paying jobs for the rest of America. It was an economy that wasn't built to compete in the 21st century. It was an economy where we've been slow to invest in clean energy technologies that will create new jobs and industries in other countries. We've been good at creating jobs in other countries because we have not invested in the clean energy that we need to. We've watched our graduation rates lag behind too much of the world. We spend much more on health care than any nation on Earth by far, but we're not any healthier for it.

Now, that was the America of yesterday, Chicago, but that doesn't have to be the America of tomorrow. That cannot be the America that all these young people inherit. You see, what we're facing right now is more than a passing crisis. It is a transformative moment. We are at an unmistakable crossroads.

There are some in Washington who want us to go down the path that we've already traveled for the last decade or so, a path where we just throw up our hands and say, oh, this is too hard, too tough; we can't do it. So we do nothing more than just hand out more tax breaks to the wealthiest few that make the rich even richer and the deficit even larger. It's a path where our health care costs keep rising, our oil dependency keeps on growing, our financial markets remain an unregulated crapshoot, our workers lose out on the jobs of tomorrow. That's one path.

That's not the future I accept for the United States of America. We did not come this far as a country because we looked backwards or stood [still]* in the face of great challenges. We didn't get here by lowering our sights or shrinking our dreams. We are a forward-looking people, a people who have always faced the future not with fear, but with determination, not with doubt, but with hope. We've always taken great chances. We've reached for new horizons and remade the world around us. And that's what we are going to do again. That's what are we are going to do again. I'm confident that we're going to weather this economic storm. But once we clear away the wreckage, the real question is, are we going to build something better in its place?

I believe we have to rebuild it better than before. I believe we have to lay a new foundation that will allow the United States of America to thrive and compete in a global economy. And that means investing in the clean energy jobs of the future. It means educating and training our workers for those jobs. It means finally controlling the health care costs that are driving this nation into debt.

I want to talk about health care for a minute, because we're having a debate in Washington right now about this issue, you may have noticed. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Give 'em hell, Barack!

* White House correction.

The President. You know what Harry Truman actually said when somebody said, "Give 'em hell, Harry"? He said, "I'm going to tell the truth; they'll think it's hell." [*Laughter*] So we're just going to tell the truth about what's going on in health care right now, because it's going to affect every single one of you.

Health insurance reform is not just about the 46 million Americans who don't have coverage. It is about them; we have to, in a country this wealthy, recognize that it is unacceptable to have 46 million people without health insurance. That is unacceptable. There is a moral imperative for us to help.

But this is also about those of you who have got health insurance. The vast majority of Americans still have their health insurance. But you know what's happening. Reform is about every one of you who has ever faced premiums and copayments that are rising faster than you can afford. It's about every one of you who has ever worried that you might lose your health insurance if you lose your job, or if you change your job. It's about anyone who's ever worried that you may not be able to get insurance or change insurance companies if you or somebody in your family has a preexisting medical condition.

Health insurance reform is about the man from Baltimore who sent us his story, middle class, college graduate, but when he changed jobs, his health insurance expired. During that time he needed emergency surgery; woke up with $10,000 worth of debt that has left him unable to save or buy a home or make a career change. That's who health reform's about.

Or it's about the woman from Colorado who told us that when she was diagnosed with breast cancer, her insurance company, who had been taking $700 a month from her in premiums, refused to pay for anything connected to the—to her disease. She felt like she had been given a second death sentence, and she had to pay for her own treatment with her retirement funds. That woman from Colorado is who health insurance reform is about.

It's about the small-business owner from New Jersey who told us that he employs eight people and provides health insurance for all of them. But his policy goes up 20 percent each year; it's his highest business expense besides his employees. He's already had to let two go. He may be forced to eliminate health insurance altogether. That's who health reform's all about.

I have heard these stories in town hall meetings; I read them in letters that I get; I see them on our web site more times than I can remember. We have talked and talked and talked about fixing health care costs for decades. And we have finally reached a point where inaction is no longer an option, Chicago. The choice is clear: Doing nothing is defending the status quo. And I'm not going to stand for a future where health care premiums rise three times faster than people's wages and 14,000 Americans lose their health insurance every day.

This Nation cannot afford a future where our Government spends more on Medicare and Medicaid than we spend on anything else. This is the price of doing nothing about health care, a price that every taxpayer and every business and every family will have to pay. It is unacceptable, it is unsustainable, and it is why we are going to pass health care reform in 2009.

Now, we won't get there without all of you hearing a lot of the same scare tactics that you always hear. They've used it to kill health insurance reform for decades. I know a lot of Americans are also satisfied with their health care right now. They're wondering what are they going to get out of it. So let me be absolutely clear about what health reform means for you.

If you already have health insurance, the reform that we're proposing will provide you with more security and more stability. It will keep government out of health care decisions. It will give you the option to keep your insurance if you're happy with it. It will prevent insurance companies from dropping your coverage if you get too sick. It will give you the security of knowing that if you lose your job or you move or you change jobs, you will still have coverage. It will limit the amount your insurance company can force you to pay for your medical costs out of your own pocket. It will cover preventive care like checkups and mammograms that save lives and money.

And if you don't have health care or you're a small business looking to cover your employees, you will be able to choose a quality, affordable

health plan through a health insurance exchange, a marketplace that promotes choice and competition, and you will get help on your premiums. And finally, no insurance company will be allowed to deny you coverage because of a preexisting medical condition. Those days are over.

Now, one other key point I want to make: I have promised that reform will not add to our deficit. It will be paid for. And I mean it. We've already determined that about two-thirds of the cost of reform can be paid for by reallocating money that is simply being wasted in Federal health care programs. And this includes over $100 billion in unwarranted subsidies that go to insurance companies as part of Medicare, subsidies that do nothing to improve care for our seniors. And while Congress is currently working through proposals to finance the remaining costs, I continue to insist that health reform not be paid for on the backs of middle class families.

But in addition to making sure that this plan doesn't add to the deficit in the short term, we also have to slow the growth of health care costs in the long run. And to do that, we want to change incentives so that doctors and nurses are free to give the best care to their patients, not just the most expensive care. We want to create an independent group of doctors and medical experts who will be able to eliminate waste and inefficiency, which could save us money and strengthen programs for our seniors.

This is what reform would mean for all of us, and right now we are closer to that reality than we have ever been. We've got the support of hospitals and doctors and nurses who represent the best of our health care system and know what's broken about it. We've got—we've made unprecedented progress in Congress.

So even though we still have a few issues to work out, what's remarkable about this point is not how far we have left to go; it's how far we've already come. I understand how easy it is for folks in Washington to become consumed by the game of politics. They want to turn everything into a tally of who's up and who's down. You've got Republican strategists who are telling the party that, "don't compromise," "go in for the kill," defeating health care reform is about "breaking President Obama."

Audience member. No way!

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Let me tell you something: I'm from Chicago; I don't break. And let me tell you something, what's even more important: This isn't about me. This is about a health care system that's breaking American families and breaking American businesses and breaking America's economy.

I've got great health insurance. [*Laughter*] I said last night, I've got a doctor who follows me everywhere. [*Laughter*] Every Member of Congress has great health insurance. So this is not about me. It's about the letters I read in the Oval Office, the stories I hear at town hall meetings. This is about that woman from Colorado and the college graduate from Maryland and the small-business owner from New Jersey. It's about all of you, all of you who are still shouldering the burden of a problem that should have been solved decades ago.

It's not a game for those Americans. It's not a game for you. We can't afford to wait any longer. So when it comes to health care, when it comes to energy, when it comes to improving our schools, when it comes to regulating our financial markets, we don't have time for the usual petty arguments. It is time right now for everybody to come together.

Now, when Buehrle pitched that perfect game, it's because teammates were making the plays. And this is the American team right now, the team of the United States of America that has to come together and make some plays for each other, not think about "I," not think about "what's in it for me." But let's figure out how to move this country forward, Chicago. I am confident we can do it, but I'm going to need your help; I'm going to need you working with me. So let's go do it.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:26 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency. In his remarks, he referred to Illinois State Rep. Constance A. Howard; Mark A. Buehrle, pitcher, and Dewayne Wise,

centerfielder, Major League Baseball's Chicago White Sox; William Kristol, editor, Weekly Standard; and Sen. James W. DeMint. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 24.

Remarks at the Department of Education
July 24, 2009

Thank you. Everybody have a seat. Thank you for the outstanding introduction from Matthew. And Matthew's teacher, you're doing, obviously, an outstanding job, although I understand Matthew's mom is also a teacher who has also won awards for her outstanding work. So the acorn doesn't fall far from the tree. We are very proud of him.

Obviously, I want to thank my wonderful Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, who has helped to lead us. I want to thank all the Members of Congress who are here, the Governors who are in attendance. And I want to give a special shout-out to Chairman George Miller of the Education Committee in the House, who has just been a outstanding partner for reform. Please give him a big round of applause.

You know, from the moment I entered office, my administration has worked to beat back this recession by creating jobs and unfreezing credit markets and extending unemployment insurance and health benefits to Americans who are out of work. But even as we've worked to end this immediate crisis, we've also taken some historic measures to build a new foundation for growth and prosperity that can help secure our economic future for generations to come.

One pillar of this new foundation is health insurance reform that can control deficits and reduce costs for families and businesses and provide quality affordable health care for every American. Another pillar is energy reform that makes clean energy profitable and creates green jobs that can't be outsourced and frees America from the grip of foreign oil. We're also working to enact financial reforms that will set up firm rules of the road to help prevent an economic crisis like the one we've just gone through from ever happening again.

But even if we do all of those things, America will not succeed in the 21st century unless we do a far better job of educating our sons and daughters, unless every child is performing the way Matthew is performing. In an economy where knowledge is the most valuable commodity a person and a country have to offer, the best jobs will go to the best educated, whether they live in the United States or India or China. In a world where countries that outeducate us today will outcompete us tomorrow, the future belongs to the nation that best educates its people, period. We know this.

But we also know that today, our education system is falling short. We've talked about it for decades, but we know that we have not made the progress we need to make. The United States, a country that has always led the way in innovation, is now being outpaced in math and science education. African American, Latino students are lagging behind White classmates in one subject after another, an achievement gap that, by one estimate, costs us hundreds of billions of dollars in wages that will not be earned, jobs that will not be done, and purchases that will not be made. And most employers raise doubts about the qualifications of future employees, rating high school graduates' basic skills as only "fair" or "poor."

Of course, we—as I said before, we've talked about this problem for years. For years, we've talked about bad statistics and an achievement gap. For years, we've talked about overcrowded classrooms and crumbling schools and corridors of shame across this country. We've talked these problems to death, year after year, decade after decade, while doing all too little to solve them.

But thanks to Arne's leadership, thanks to George Miller's leadership, thanks to all the dedicated Americans in statehouses and schoolhouses and communities across this country, that's beginning to change. We're beginning to break free from the partisanship and the petty bickering that have stood in the way of progress for so long. We're beginning to move past the stale debates about either more money or more

reform, because the fact is, we need both. We're beginning to offer every single American the best education the world has to offer from the cradle to the classroom, from college to careers.

In recent months, I've spoken about the different parts of this strategy. I've spoken about what we're doing to prepare community college students to find a job when they graduate, to make college and advanced training more affordable, and to raise the bar in early learning programs. Today I want to talk about what we can do to raise the quality of education from kindergarten through senior year.

Because improving education is central to rebuilding our economy, we set aside over $4 billion in the Recovery Act to promote improvements in schools. This is one of the largest investments in education reform in American history. And rather than divvying it up and handing it out, we are letting States and school districts compete for it. That's how we can incentivize excellence and spur reform and launch a race to the top in America's public schools.

That race starts today. I'm issuing a challenge to our Nation's Governors, to school boards and principals and teachers, to businesses and non-for-profits, to parents and to students: If you set and enforce rigorous and challenging standards and assessments, if you put outstanding teachers at the front of the classroom, if you turn around failing schools, your State can win a Race to the Top grant that will not only help students outcompete workers around the world, but let them fulfill their God-given potential.

This competition will not be based on politics or ideology or the preferences of a particular interest group. Instead, it will be based on a simple principle: whether a State is ready to do what works. We will use the best evidence available to determine whether a State can meet a few key benchmarks for reform, and States that outperform the rest will be rewarded with a grant. Not every State will win, and not every school district will be happy with the results. But America's children, America's economy, America itself will be better for it.

Now, one of the benchmarks we will use is whether States are designing and enforcing higher and clearer standards and assessments that prepare a student to graduate from college and succeed in life. Right now some States like Massachusetts are setting high standards, but many others are not. Many others are low-balling expectations for students, telling our kids they're prepared to move on to the next grade even if they aren't, awarding diplomas even if a graduate doesn't have the knowledge and skills to thrive in our economy.

That's a recipe for economic decline, and it has to stop. With the Race to the Top fund, we will reward States that come together and adopt a common set of standards and assessments. Now let me be clear: This is not about the kind of testing that has mushroomed under No Child Left Behind. This is not about more tests. It's not about teaching to the test, and it's not about judging a teacher solely on the results of a single test.

It is about finally getting testing right, about developing thoughtful assessments that lead to better results, assessments that don't simply measure whether students can use a pencil to fill in a bubble, but whether they possess basic knowledge and essential skills like problem-solving and creative thinking, creativity and entrepreneurship. And already, 46 States are working to develop such standards. I urge those 46 States to finish the job. I urge the other four to get onboard. [*Laughter*]

One of the other benchmarks we'll be using in awarding Race to the Top grants is whether outstanding teachers are being placed in our classrooms. From the moment a student enters a school, the single most important factor in their success is the person in front of the classroom. Every one of us can point to a teacher who inspired us and in some way shaped the course of our lives. Great teachers are the bulwark of America. They should be valued, and they should be honored. Few have worked harder to do that than our national union leaders. Randi Weingarten—is right here—and Dennis Van Roekel are two union leaders who are here, and I'm very pleased that they're with us today.

But if we're honest with ourselves, we'll admit that in too many places, we have no way—at least no good way of distinguishing good teachers from bad ones. As Arne has pointed out in the past, they have 300,000 teachers in California. The top 10 percent are 30,000 of the best that are out there. The bottom 10 percent are 30,000 of the worst out there. The problem is, we have no way to tell which is which.

That's where data comes in. Some places are keeping electronic records of how a student does from one year to the next and how a class does in any given year. This helps students, parents, teachers, principals, and school boards know what's working and what's not in the classroom. You know, basketball coaches have a game tape for the team to see what they did right and what they did wrong after a tough series; teachers and principals should have a way of doing the same.

Now, I recognize there's a concern among some that a teacher won't be judged fairly when we start linking students' performance to the performance of their teachers. And that's why we need to bring teachers into the process and make sure their voices are heard. And that's why we need to make sure we use tests as just one part of a broader evaluation of teachers' performance.

But let me be clear: Success should be judged by results, and data is a powerful tool to determine results. We can't ignore facts; we can't ignore data. That's why any State that makes it unlawful to link student progress to teacher evaluations will have to change its ways if it wants to compete for a grant. That's why the Race to the Top grants will go to States that use data effectively to reward effective teachers, to support teachers who are struggling, and when necessary, to replace teachers who aren't up to the job.

And we also need to reward States that are placing outstanding teachers in schools and subjects, like math and science, where they're needed most. That's one way to foster the next generation of math and science teachers. And by the way, everyone has a role to play in training these teachers. So universities and nonprofit organizations can launch programs like UTeach at UT Austin that allows aspiring teachers to get a math or science degree and teaching certificate at the same time, and businesses can follow the example of Intel and Microsoft by developing the software tools and cutting-edge technologies that prepare today's students to be tomorrow's teachers.

So we know we need better standards, and we know we need excellent teachers. But we also know that a number of chronically underperforming schools will require an extra effort to get back on their feet. Roughly 5,000 schools across this country, the bottom 5 percent, fall into this category. In fact, just 2,000 high schools produce over 50 percent of America's dropouts.

Now, there's no silver bullet when it comes to turning these schools around. We know that many of these schools are in very tough neighborhoods, and kids are coming to school already with some significant problems. And the most effective and innovative approaches will be developed outside of Washington in communities across this country. The best ideas will come from educators who are helping a young man who's far behind to catch up or helping a young woman master the English language or going the extra mile for a student with special needs. Change will come from the bottom up.

But what we can do, all of us in Federal Government, is reward States that are pursuing forceful and effective and consistent approaches with Race to the Top grants. There are a number of different strategies that school districts are employing to fix these schools that are in such tough shape. One strategy involves replacing the principal, replacing much of the staff, and giving the school a second chance. Another strategy involves inviting a great nonprofit to help manage a troubled school. A third strategy involves converting a dropout factory into a successful charter school. These are public schools funded by parents, teachers, and civic or community organizations with broad leeway to innovate.

Now, we can't hold charter schools to lower standards than traditional public schools. If a charter school is falling short year after year, it should be shut down. But if we're holding charter schools accountable and if we are holding them to a high standard of excellence, then I

believe they can be a force for innovation in our public schools. And that's why I've encouraged States to lift caps on the number of charter schools that are allowed, something being done in Louisiana, Indiana, and across the country. And that's why we will reward States that pursue rigorous and accountable charter schools with Race to the Top fund grants.

Better standards, better teaching, better schools, data-driven results, that's what we will reward with our Race to the Top fund. But as I've said before, fixing the problem in our schools is not a task for Washington alone. It will take school administrators, board presidents, and local union leaders making collective bargaining a catalyst, and not an impediment, to reform. It will take business leaders asking what they can do to invest in education in their communities. It will take parents asking the right questions at their child's school and making sure their children are doing their homework at night.

And it will take students—I'm not worried about Matthew, but all the other ones—[*laughter*]—including my daughters, showing up for school on time and paying attention in class. Ultimately, their education is up to them; it's up to their parents; it's up to their teachers; it's up to all of us.

I'll never forget a school I visited one day when I was a community organizer in Chicago. As I walked around the school with the principal, I remember saying to her how wonderful it was to see all these kids so full of energy and hope and the spark in their eye. And when he asked them what they were going to be when they grew up, they said, "We're going to be doctors and lawyers," and they all had these big dreams for the future. And I remember the principal saying that soon all that would change; that in a year or two, something would shut off inside as they began to realize their hopes wouldn't come to pass, not because they weren't smart enough, not because they weren't talented enough, but because they didn't see a pathway to success.

And that's true of too many children in this country. Maybe they don't have a great teacher. Maybe they don't find their classes exciting. Maybe they aren't being challenged at school. Maybe their parents aren't pushing them the way they need to. Maybe nobody is setting high expectations for them. Maybe they can't afford a college education. Maybe they don't know anybody who's ever gone to college. And the reason you're here, the reason Arne is here, the reason I'm here is to make sure that we are giving all of those children, all our children, the pathways they need to make the most of their abilities, to make the most of their opportunities, to make the most of their lives.

I am absolutely confident that if I do my part, if Arne does his part, if our teachers do their part, if you do yours, if the American people do theirs, then we will not only strengthen our economy over the long run, and we will not only make America's entire education system the envy of the world, but we will launch a race to the top that will prepare every child, everywhere in America, for the challenges of the 21st century.

I'm convinced we can do that. But it's not going to come easy; it's not going to come quick. We're going to have to have staying power; we're going to have to be consistent; we're going to have to put the interests of our children ahead of our own parochial interests. But we have no choice. And I'm absolutely confident that we can make it happen.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:34 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Matthew Austin, eighth grade student, Howard University Middle School of Mathematics and Science, and his mother Monica Snipes-Austin; Kimberly Worthy, 2009 DC Teacher of the Year; Randi Weingarten, president, American Federation of Teachers; and Dennis Van Roekel, president, National Education Association.

Remarks Prior to Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs's Briefing
July 24, 2009

The President. Hey, it's a cameo appearance. Sit down, sit down. I need to help Gibbs out a little bit here.

Audience member. You're the new Press Secretary?

The President. If you got to do a job, do it yourself.

I wanted to address you guys directly because over the last day and a half, obviously, there's been all sorts of controversy around the incident that happened in Cambridge with Professor Gates and the police department there.

I actually just had a conversation with Sergeant Jim Crowley, the officer involved. And I have to tell you that as I said yesterday, my impression of him was that he was a outstanding police officer and a good man, and that was confirmed in the phone conversation. And I told him that.

And I—because this has been ratcheting up—and I obviously helped to contribute ratcheting it up—I want to make clear that in my choice of words, I think I unfortunately gave an impression that I was maligning the Cambridge Police Department or Sergeant Crowley specifically. And I could have calibrated those words differently, and I told this to Sergeant Crowley.

I continue to believe, based on what I have heard, that there was an overreaction in pulling Professor Gates out of his home to the station. I also continue to believe, based on what I heard, that Professor Gates probably overreacted as well. My sense is you've got two good people in a circumstance in which neither of them were able to resolve the incident in the way that it should have been resolved and the way they would have liked it to be resolved.

The fact that it has garnered so much attention, I think, is a testimony to the fact that these are issues that are still very sensitive here in America. And so to the extent that my choice of words didn't illuminate, but rather contributed to more media frenzy, I think that was unfortunate.

What I'd like to do then is make sure that everybody steps back for a moment, recognizes that these are two decent people, not extrapolate too much from the facts, but as I said at the press conference, be mindful of the fact that because of our history, because of the difficulties of the past, you know, African Americans are sensitive to these issues. And even when you've got a police officer who has a fine track record on racial sensitivity, interactions between police officers and the African American community can sometimes be fraught with misunderstanding.

My hope is, is that as a consequence of this event, this ends up being what's called a teachable moment, where all of us instead of pumping up the volume, spend a little more time listening to each other and try to focus on how we can generally improve relations between police officers and minority communities, and that instead of flinging accusations, we can all be a little more reflective in terms of what we can do to contribute to more unity. Lord knows we need it right now, because over the last 2 days as we've discussed this issue, I don't know if you've noticed, but nobody has been paying much attention to health care. [*Laughter*]

I will not use this time to spend more words on health care, although I can't guarantee that that will be true next week. But I just wanted to emphasize that—one last point I guess I'd make. There are some who say that as President I shouldn't have stepped into this at all because it's a local issue. I have to tell you that that thing—that part of it I disagree with. The fact that this has become such a big issue, I think, is indicative of the fact that race is still a troubling aspect of our society. Whether I were Black or White, I think that me commenting on this and, hopefully, contributing to constructive, as opposed to negative, understandings about the issue is part of my portfolio.

So at the end of the conversation, there was a discussion about—my conversation with Sergeant Crowley, there was discussion about he and I and Professor Gates having a beer here in the White House. We don't know if that's scheduled yet—[*laughter*]—but we may put that together.

He also did say he wanted to find out if there was a way of getting the press off his lawn. [*Laughter*] I informed him that I can't get the press off my lawn. [*Laughter*] He pointed out that my lawn is bigger than his lawn. [*Laughter*] But if anybody has any connections to the Boston press as well as national press, Sergeant Crowley would be happy for you to stop trampling his grass.

All right. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:33 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Henry Louis Gates, Jr., director, W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University; and James Crowley, sergeant, City of Cambridge Police Department, MA.

Remarks on Signing a Proclamation Honoring the 19th Anniversary of the Americans With Disabilities Act
July 24, 2009

The President. Thank you. Please, everybody be seated. Thank you. First of all, how about my Secretary of State? Give it up for Senator Hillary Clinton. She is doing an unbelievable job. She's traveling all around the world delivering a message that America is back and ready to lead. And everywhere she goes she is representing us with grace and strength, and we are very fortunate to have her.

I'm also lucky to have an outstanding Attorney General in Eric Holder, so I wanted to make sure that we thank him for being here; my Secretary of Labor, who's committed to these issues, Hilda Solis. We've got a couple of Governors in the house—at least I see one of them over here, Governor David Paterson of New York. And I think that Christine Gregoire was here. There she is, right here—from Washington State.

I want to thank the outstanding Members of Congress who are on the stage: Senator Dan Inouye, Representative Steny Hoyer, Representative Robert Andrews, Representative James Sensenbrenner, Representative Jim Langevin, thank you so much. Please give them a big round of applause.

And not on the stage, but extraordinarily important, are three key figures who helped to get the original ADA passed. I want to acknowledge them. First of all, not able to attend, but this guy is a fierce warrior on behalf of the disabilities community, Tom Harkin. He couldn't be here, but give him a round of applause. Another person who could not be here but was instrumental in guiding the passage of this landmark legislation, Bob Dole, but his wonderful partner, Elizabeth Dole—Senator Elizabeth Dole—is here, so please give her a round of applause on behalf of Bob Dole. And Attorney General and somebody who worked very hard on this issue, Richard Thornburgh; please give him a big round of applause. Where's Richard? There he is.

Well, welcome to the White House. We are thrilled to have you all here for a historic announcement regarding our global commitment to fundamental human rights for persons with disabilities. I'm also honored to mark the anniversary of a historic piece of civil rights legislation with so many of the people who helped make it possible, and I'd like to reflect on that for a few moments.

I'm reminded today of my father-in-law—some of you have heard his story—Fraser Robinson. He was Michelle's hero. When you talk to her about her dad, even today she just lights up. He was a vibrant and athletic man who provided for his family as a shift worker at a water treatment plant in Chicago. And in his early thirties, he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. And even as it progressed, even as he struggled to get dressed in the morning and used two canes to get himself to work every day, despite the fact that he had to wake up a little bit earlier and work a little harder to overcome the barriers he faced

every day, he never complained. He never asked for special treatment. He just wanted to be given the opportunity to do right by his family. Never missed a day of work; would have trouble buttoning his own shirts, but he would make sure that he woke up in time to do it.

And by the time I met him, he would struggle with those two canes, but even if he had to go over a bumpy patch of grass to watch his son's ball games or go up a flight of stairs so that he could see his daughter dance, he would do it. This was before the ADA passed. And I think about him all the time when I think about these issues.

It's a reminder of the very promise of the ADA. Nineteen years ago this weekend, Democrats and Republicans, advocates and ordinary Americans, came together here at the White House to watch President George H.W. Bush sign the ADA into law. Folks traveled from all across America to witness a milestone in the long march to achieve equal opportunity for all.

But like all great movements, this one did not begin or end in Washington, DC. It began in small towns and big cities across this country. It began with people like Fraser Robinson showing that they can be full contributors to society regardless of the lack of awareness of others. It began when people refused to accept a second-class status in America. It began when they not only refused to accept the way the world saw them, but also the way they had seen themselves.

And when quiet acts of persistence and perseverance were coupled with vocal acts of advocacy, a movement grew, and people marched and organized and testified. And parents of children with disabilities asked why their children, who had the same hopes and dreams as children everywhere else, were left out and left behind. And wounded veterans came home from war only to find that, despite their sacrifice for America, they now felt excluded from America's promise.

We had a little meeting before we came out, and Tony Coelho, who was instrumental on this issue, spoke in just incredibly moving terms about what it meant for him to be an epileptic and the fact that discrimination was rife. He was rejected from the priesthood because that was considered unacceptable. He was rejected from the Army because that was considered unacceptable.

Those experiences could have just been internalized and people could have felt doubt, but instead, it became a source of strength. And step by step, progress was won, laws were changed. Americans with disabilities were finally guaranteed the right to vote, a right that only carries real meaning when you can enter the voting booth to cast that vote. Folks were extended certain protections from discrimination and given the needed rehabilitation and training to go to the job. And even though we still have a long way to go with regard to education, children with disabilities were no longer excluded, no longer kept separate, and then no longer denied the opportunity to learn the same skills in the same classroom as other children.

Now, even two decades ago, too many barriers still stood, too many Americans suffered under segregation and discrimination. Americans with disabilities were still measured by what folks thought they couldn't do, not by what they can. Employers often assumed disabled meant unable. Millions of Americans with disabilities were eager to work, but couldn't find a job. An employer could have told a person with a disability, "No, we don't hire your kind." That person then could have tried to find recourse at the courthouse, only to find that she couldn't enter the building and wouldn't find a receptive audience even if she did.

What was needed was a bill of rights for persons with disabilities, and that's what the ADA was. It was a formal acknowledgment that Americans with disabilities are Americans first, and they are entitled to the same rights and freedoms as everybody else: a right to belong and participate fully in the American experience, a right to dignity and respect in the workplace and beyond, the freedom to make of our lives what we will.

In a time when so many doubted that people with disabilities could participate in our society, contribute to our economy, or support their families, the ADA assumed they could. Americans with disabilities didn't ask for charity or demand special treatment; they only wanted a fair shot at opportunity. They didn't want to be

isolated, they wanted to be integrated; not dependent, but independent. And allowing all Americans to engage in our society and our economy is in our national interest, especially now, when we all have a part to play to build a new foundation for America's lasting prosperity.

So the ADA showed the world our full commitment to the rights of people with disabilities, and now we have an opportunity to live up to that commitment. Today, 650 million people—10 percent of the world's population—live with a disability. In developing countries, 90 percent of children with disabilities don't attend school. Women and girls with disabilities are too often subject to deep discrimination.

Disability rights aren't just civil rights to be enforced here at home; they're universal rights to be recognized and promoted around the world. And that's why I'm proud to announce that next week the United States of America will join 140 other nations in signing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It's the first new human rights convention of the 21st century.

This extraordinary treaty calls on all nations to guarantee rights like those afforded under the ADA. It urges equal protection and equal benefits before the law for all citizens, reaffirms the inherent dignity and worth and independence of all persons with disabilities worldwide. I've instructed Ambassador Susan Rice to formally sign the Convention at the United Nations in New York next week, and I hope that the Senate can give swift consideration and approval to the Convention once I submit it for their advice and consent.

And even as we extend our commitment to persons for—with disabilities around the world, we're working to deepen that commitment here at home. We've lifted the ban on stem cell research. We've reauthorized the Children's Health Insurance Program, continuing coverage for 7 million children and covering an additional 4 million children in need, including children with disabilities. I was proud to sign the landmark Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Act, the first piece of comprehensive legislation specifically aimed at addressing the challenges that are faced by Americans living with paralysis.

We've nearly doubled funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. We're strengthening antidiscrimination enforcement at the Justice Department. We're creating a new special assistant position at the Department of Transportation just to focus on accessible transportation. We've launched the "Year of Community Living" to affirm the fundamental right of people with disabilities to live with dignity and respect wherever they choose.

So I'm proud of the progress we've made. But I'm not satisfied, and I know you aren't either. Until every American with a disability can learn in their local public school in the manner best for them, until they can apply for a job without fear of discrimination, and live and work independently in their communities if that's what they choose, we've got more work to do. As long as we as a people still too easily succumb to casual discrimination or fear of the unfamiliar, we've still got more work to do.

As we continue that work, we should remember just who it was that the ADA was all about. It was about the young girl with cerebral palsy who just wanted to see a movie at her local theater, but was turned away. It was about the Vietnam veteran who returned home paralyzed and said he felt like he'd fought for everyone but himself. It was about the thousands of people with disabilities who showed up at public hearings all across the country to share their stories of exclusion and injustice, and the millions more they spoke up for.

Because they did, we live in a country where our children can grow up with every opportunity to learn and compete, where our disabled veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan can navigate public places more easily, and where 54 million Americans with disabilities can pursue their full measure of happiness. And what we've learned—what we've—what they have taught us is that it is far more noble and worthwhile and valuable to make it possible for these Americans to live up to their full potential. Because when we do, it

makes all of us more whole, it makes our Union more perfect, it makes the United States of America strong.

Every morning, I walk along the Colonnade that connects this house to the Oval Office. And there's something you might not notice unless you're really paying attention—and I'll be honest, when I take that walk, I usually have a lot on my mind—[*laughter*]—but there's a gentle slope at the end of that Colonnade, a ramp that was installed during a renovation of the West Wing 75 years ago, making it much easier for one of my predecessors to get to work.

Back then, fear and prejudice towards Americans with disabilities was the norm, but most Americans didn't even know that President Roosevelt had a disability. That means that what most Americans also didn't know was that President Roosevelt's disability made absolutely no difference to his ability to renew our confidence or rescue our economy and mobilize our greatest generation to save our way of life.

Let me correct that: I actually think it did make a difference in a positive way. What he told us was that "further progress must, of necessity, depend on a deeper understanding on the part of every man and woman in the United States." I believe we're getting there. And today, because more than one in five Americans live with a disability, and chances are, the rest of us love somebody with one, we remember our obligation to ensuring their every chance to pursue the American Dream. We celebrate the courage and commitment of those who brought us to this point. And we recommit ourselves to building a world free of unnecessary barriers and full of that deeper understanding.

So thank you all, for being here. Let's sign this bill.

[*At this point, the President signed the proclamation.*]

The President. There you go. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:58 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Thomas A. Harkin; former Sen. Robert J. Dole; former Attorney General Richard L. Thornburgh; former Rep. Anthony L. Coelho; and Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations. The proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Weekly Address
July 25, 2009

I recently heard from a small-business owner from New Jersey who wrote that he employs eight people and provides health insurance for all of them. But his policy goes up at least 20 percent each year, and today, it costs almost $1,400 per family per month—his highest business expense beside his employees' salaries. He's already had to let two of them go, and he may be forced to eliminate health insurance altogether. He wrote, simply: "I am not looking for free health care. I would just like to get my premiums reduced enough to be able to afford it."

Day after day, I hear from people just like him: workers worried they may lose their coverage if they become too sick or lose their job or change jobs; families who fear they may not be able to get insurance, or change insurance, if someone in their family has a preexisting condition; and small-business owners trying to make a living and do right by the people they employ.

These are the mom and pop stores and restaurants, beauty shops and construction companies that support families and sustain communities. They're the tiny startups with big ideas, hoping to become the next Google or Apple or HP. And, as shown in a new report released today by the White House Council of Economic Advisers, right now they are getting crushed by skyrocketing health care costs.

Because they lack the bargaining power that large businesses have and faced higher administrative costs per person, small businesses pay up to 18 percent more for the very same health insurance plans, costs that eat into their profits and get passed on to their employees.

As a result, small businesses are much less likely to offer health insurance. Those that do tend to have less generous plans. In a recent survey, one-third of small businesses reported cutting benefits. Many have dropped coverage altogether, and many have shed jobs or shut their doors entirely. This is unsustainable, it's unacceptable, and it's going to change when I sign health insurance reform into law.

Under the reform plans in Congress, small businesses will be able to purchase health insurance through an insurance exchange, a marketplace where they can compare the price, quality, and services of a wide variety of plans, many of which will provide better coverage at lower costs than the plans they have now. They can then pick the one that works best for them and their employees.

Small businesses that choose to insure their employees will also receive a tax credit to help them pay for it. If a small business chooses not to provide coverage, its employees can purchase high-quality, affordable coverage through the insurance exchange on their own. Low-income workers, folks who are more likely to be working at small businesses, will qualify for a subsidy to help them cover the costs.

And no matter how you get your insurance, insurance companies will no longer be allowed to deny you coverage because of a preexisting condition. They won't be able to drop your coverage if you get too sick or lose your job or change jobs, and we'll limit the amount your insurance company can force you to pay out of your own pocket.

To view the new report and learn more about how health insurance reform will help small businesses, go to whitehouse.gov and send us your questions and comments. We'll answer as many of them as we can later this week.

Over the past few months, I've been pushing hard to make sure we finally address the need for health insurance reform, which has been deferred year after year, decade after decade. And today, after a lot of hard work in Congress, we are closer than ever before to finally passing reform that will reduce costs, expand coverage, and provide more choices for our families and businesses.

It's taken months to reach this point, and once this legislation passes, we'll need to move thoughtfully and deliberately to implement these reforms over a period of several years. That's why I feel such a sense of urgency about moving this process forward.

Now, I know there are those who are urging us to delay reform. And some of them have actually admitted that this is a tactic designed to stop any reform at all. Some have even suggested that, regardless of its merits, health care reform should be stopped as a way to inflict political damage on my administration. I'll leave it to them to explain that to the American people.

What I'm concerned about is the damage that's being done right now to the health of our families, the success of our businesses, and the long-term fiscal stability of our government. I'm concerned about hard-working folks who want nothing more than the security that comes with knowing they can get the care they need, when they need it. I'm concerned about the small-business owners who are asking for nothing more than a chance to seize their piece of the American Dream. I'm concerned about our children and our grandchildren who will be saddled with deficits that will continue piling up year after year unless we pass reform.

This debate is not a political game for these Americans, and they cannot afford to keep waiting for reform. We owe it to them to finally get it done, and to get it done this year. Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:20 p.m. on July 24 in Room 236 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building for broadcast on July 25. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 24, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on July 25.

Remarks at the United States-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue
July 27, 2009

Thank you. Good morning. It is a great honor to welcome you to the first meeting of the Strategic Economic Dialogue between the United States and China. This is an essential step in advancing a positive, constructive, and comprehensive relationship between our countries. I'm pleased that President Hu shares my commitment to a sustained dialogue to enhance our shared interests.

President Hu and I both felt that it was important to get our relationship off to a good start. Of course, as a new President and also as a basketball fan, I have learned from the words of Yao Ming, who said, "No matter whether you are new or an old team member, you need time to adjust to one another." Well, through the constructive meetings that we've already had, and through this dialogue, I'm confident that we will meet Yao's standard.

I want to acknowledge the remarkable American and Chinese leaders who will cochair this effort. Hillary Clinton and Tim Geithner are two of my closest advisers, and they have both obtained extraordinary experience working with China. And I know that they will have extremely capable and committed Chinese counterparts in State Councilor Dai and Vice Premier Wang. Thank you very much for being here.

I'm also looking forward to the confirmation of an outstanding U.S. Ambassador to China, Governor Jon Huntsman, who is here today. Jon has deep experience living and working in Asia, and unlike me, he speaks fluent Mandarin Chinese. He also happens to be a Republican who cochaired Senator McCain's campaign. And I think that demonstrates Jon's commitment to serving his country and the broad, bipartisan support for positive and productive relations between the United States and China. So thank you, Jon, for your willingness to serve.

Today we meet in a building that speaks to the history of the last century. It houses a national memorial to President Woodrow Wilson, a man who held office when the 20th century was still young and America's leadership in the world was emerging. It is named for Ronald Reagan, a man who came of age during two World Wars and whose Presidency helped usher in a new era of history. And it holds a piece of the Berlin Wall, a decades-long symbol of division that was finally torn down, unleashing a rising tide of globalization that continues to shape our world.

One hundred years ago, in the early days of the 20th century, it was clear that there were momentous choices to be made, choices about the borders of nations and the rights of human beings. But in Woodrow Wilson's day, no one could have foreseen the arc of history that led to a wall coming down in Berlin, nor could they have imagined the conflict and upheaval that characterized the years in between. For people everywhere, from Boston to Beijing, the 20th century was a time of great progress, but that progress also came with a great price.

Today, we look out on the horizon of a new century. And as we launch this dialogue, it's important for us to reflect upon the questions that will shape the 21st century. Will growth be stalled by events like our current financial crisis, or will we cooperate to create balanced and sustainable growth, lifting more people out of poverty and creating a broader prosperity around the world? Will the need for energy breed competition and climate change, or will we build partnerships to produce clean power and to protect our planet? Will nuclear weapons spread unchecked, or will we forge a new consensus to use this power for only peaceful purposes? Will extremists be able to stir conflict and division, or will we unite on behalf of our shared security? Will nations and peoples define themselves solely by their differences, or can we find common ground necessary to meet our common challenges and to respect the dignity of every human being?

We can't predict with certainty what the future will bring, but we can be certain about the issues that will define our times. And we also know this: The relationship between the United States and China will shape the 21st century, which makes it as important as any bilateral relationship in the world. That really must

underpin our partnership. That is the responsibility that together we bear.

As we look to the future, we can learn from our past, for history shows us that both our nations benefit from engagement that is grounded in mutual interest and mutual respect. During my time in office, we will mark the 40th anniversary of President Nixon's trip to China. At that time, the world was much different than it is today. America had fought three wars in East Asia in just 30 years, and the cold war was in a stalemate. China's economy was cut off from the world, and a huge percentage of the Chinese people lived in extreme poverty.

Back then, our dialogue was guided by a narrow focus on our shared rivalry with the Soviet Union. Today, we have a comprehensive relationship that reflects the deepening ties among our people. Our countries have now shared relations for longer than we were estranged. Our people interact in so many ways. And I believe that we are poised to make steady progress on some of the most important issues of our times.

My confidence is rooted in the fact that the United States and China share mutual interests. If we advance those interests through cooperation, our people will benefit and the world will be better off, because our ability to partner with each other is a prerequisite for progress on many of the most pressing global challenges.

Let me name some of those challenges. First, we can cooperate to advance our mutual interests in a lasting economic recovery. The current crisis has made it clear that the choices made within our borders reverberate across the global economy, and this is true not just in New York and Seattle, but in Shanghai and Shenzhen as well. That is why we must remain committed to strong bilateral and multilateral coordination. And that is the example we have set by acting aggressively to restore growth, to prevent a deeper recession, and to save jobs for our people.

Going forward, we can deepen this cooperation. We can promote financial stability through greater transparency and regulatory reform. We can pursue trade that is free and fair and seek to conclude an ambitious and balanced Doha round agreement. We can update international institutions so that growing economies like China play a greater role that matches their greater responsibility. And as Americans save more and Chinese are able to spend more, we can put growth on a more sustainable foundation, because just as China has benefited from substantial investment and profitable exports, China can also be an enormous market for American goods.

Second, we can cooperate to advance our mutual interest in a clean, secure, and prosperous energy future. The United States and China are the two largest consumers of energy in the world. We are also the two largest emitters of greenhouse gases in the world. Let's be frank: Neither of us profits from a growing dependence on foreign oil, nor can we spare our people from the ravages of climate change unless we cooperate. Common sense calls upon us to act in concert.

Both of our countries are taking steps to transform our energy economies. Together, we can chart a low carbon recovery, we can expand joint efforts at research and development to promote the clean and efficient use of energy, and we can work together to forge a global response at the climate change conference in Copenhagen and beyond. And the best way to foster the innovation that can increase our security and prosperity is to keep our markets open to new ideas, new exchanges, and new sources of energy.

Third, we can cooperate to advance our mutual interests in stopping the spread of nuclear weapons. Make no mistake: The more nations acquire these weapons, the more likely it is that they will be used. Neither America nor China has an interest in a terrorist acquiring a bomb or a nuclear arms race breaking out in East Asia. That is why we must continue our collaboration to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and make it clear to North Korea that the path to security and respect can be traveled if they meet their obligations. And that is why we must also be united in preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and urging the Islamic Republic to live up to its international obligations.

This is not about singling out any one nation. It is about the responsibility of all nations. Together, we must cooperate to secure all vulnerable nuclear materials around the world, which will be a focus of our global nuclear summit next year. And together, we must strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty by renewing its basic bargain: Countries with nuclear weapons will move towards disarmament, countries without nuclear weapons will not acquire them, and all countries can access peaceful nuclear energy. A balance of terror cannot hold. In the 21st century, a strong and global regime is the only basis for security from the world's deadliest weapons.

And fourth, we can cooperate to advance our mutual interests in confronting transnational threats. The most pressing dangers we face no longer come from competition among great powers. They come from extremists who would murder innocents, from traffickers and pirates who pursue their own profits at the expense of others, from diseases that know no borders, and from suffering and civil wars that breed instability and terror. These are the threats of the 21st century, and that is why the pursuit of power among nations must no longer be seen as a zero-sum game. Progress, including security, must be shared.

Through increased ties between our militaries, we can diminish causes for dispute while providing a framework for cooperation. Through continued intelligence sharing, we can disrupt terrorist plots and dismantle terrorist networks. Through early warning and coordination, we can check the spread of disease. And through determined diplomacy, we must meet our responsibility to seek the peaceful resolution of conflict, and that can begin with a renewed push to end the suffering in Darfur and to promote a comprehensive peace in Sudan.

All of these issues are rooted in the fact that no one nation can meet the challenges of the 21st century on its own nor effectively advance its interests in isolation. It is this fundamental truth that compels us to cooperate. I have no illusion that the United States and China will agree on every issue nor choose to see the world in the same way. This was already noted by our previous speaker. But that only makes dialogue more important, so that we can know each other better and communicate our concerns with candor.

For instance, the United States respects the progress that China has made by lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. Just as we respect China's ancient and remarkable culture, its remarkable achievements, we also strongly believe that the religion and culture of all peoples must be respected and protected and that all people should be free to speak their minds, and that includes ethnic and religious minorities in China as surely as it includes minorities within the United States.

Support for human rights and human dignity is ingrained in America. Our Nation is made up of immigrants from every part of the world. We have protected our unity and struggled to perfect our Union by extending basic rights to all our people, and those rights include the freedom to speak your mind, to worship your God, and to choose your leaders. These are not things that we seek to impose; this is who we are. It guides our openness to one another and to the world.

China has its own distinct story that shapes its own worldview. And Americans know the richness of China's history because it helped to shape the world and it helped to shape America. We know the talent of the Chinese people because they have helped to create this great country. My own Cabinet contains two Chinese Americans. And we know that despite our differences, America is enriched through deeper ties with a country of 1.3 billion people that is at once ancient and dynamic, ties that can be forged through increased exchanges among our people and constructive bilateral relations between our governments. That is how we will narrow our divisions.

Let us be honest: We know that some are wary of the future. Some in China think that America will try to contain China's ambitions; some in America think that there is something to fear in a rising China. I take a different view, and I believe President Hu takes a different view as well. I believe in a future where China is a strong, prosperous, and successful member of the community of nations, a future when our nations are partners out of necessity, but also

out of opportunity. This future is not fixed, but it is a destination that can be reached if we pursue a sustained dialogue like the one that you will commence today and act on what we hear and what we learn.

Thousands of years ago, the great philosopher Mencius said: "A trail through the mountains, if used, becomes a path in a short time, but, if unused, becomes blocked by grass in an equally short time." Our task is to forge a path to the future that we seek for our children, to prevent mistrust or the inevitable differences of the moment from allowing that trail to be blocked by grass, to always be mindful of the journey that we are undertaking together.

This dialogue will help determine the ultimate destination of that journey. It represents a commitment to shape our young century through sustained cooperation and not confrontation. I look forward to carrying this effort forward through my first visit to China, where I hope to come to know better your leaders, your people, and your majestic country. Together, I'm confident that we can move steadily in the direction of progress and meet our responsibility to our people and to the future that we will all share.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:35 a.m. at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to Yao Ming, center, National Basketball Association's Houston Rockets; Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner; Gov. Jon M. Huntsman, Jr., of Utah; Sen. John McCain, 2008 Republican Presidential candidate; Secretary of Energy Steven Chu; and Secretary of Commerce Gary F. Locke.

Remarks Honoring the 2008 Women's National Basketball Association Champion Detroit Shock
July 27, 2009

The President. Hey, guys. Hello, hello, hello. Please, everybody, be seated. Be seated. Well, welcome to the White House, everybody. And we are so pleased to have the Detroit Shock here. We want to congratulate them and all your fans for your third WNBA championship in 6 years. Give them a big round of applause.

We've got some special fans from Capitol Hill here who take great pride in Detroit: Senator Carl Levin is in the house; Representative Sandy Levin is in the house; and Representative Carolyn Kilpatrick is in the house.

I want to thank Donna Orender, the president of the WNBA, who's here today. Where's—Donna is right back—there she is right there. Congratulations on the success of this league and the inspiration it provides to young women everywhere.

I also want to thank the owner of the Detroit Shock and the Detroit Pistons, Karen Davidson, for coming. Your husband—go ahead, give him a round of applause. [*Applause*] Your husband Bill had a great impact not just in the NBA and the WNBA, but also on countless individuals who benefit from his giving spirit.

Now, I have to say, everybody knows I'm a Chicago Bulls fan. And a few years ago, when the Bulls and the Pistons were thick in the middle of their rivalry, I never imagined that I'd be saying, "Congratulations, Bill Laimbeer," or, "Congratulations, Rick Mahorn." [*Laughter*] And if I knew I was President then, to think that I'd be inviting them to the White House is hard to take. [*Laughter*] But let's face it: These guys are winners. They always have been. They know how to win. And I want to congratulate the finals MVP Katie Smith, team captain Cheryl Ford, and all the other women that make this such an outstanding team.

I also want to salute this organization—this team for donating so much time and energy to lifting up the Detroit community. They've given free tickets to underprivileged youth, mentored abused women and children, donated backpacks filled with school supplies to foster kids, restored a rundown library into a safe, clean place for kids to play and to grow.

And I want to thank them for participating in our United We Serve summer of service. Earlier today these players took time to host a WNBA Fit Clinic for young boys and girls at a local's Boys and Girls Club to teach fitness and nutrition and self-confidence, and I understand they brought some of the young participants along with them to the White House. I suspect it must be these young people here today.

Let me also say something as a father—I was mentioning it to the team before we came out—it's hard to believe the WNBA has already been around for 12 years, and that means that my daughters have never known a time when women couldn't play professional sports.

They look at the TV, and they see me watching "SportsCenter," and they see young women who look like them on the screen. And that lets them and all our young women, as well as young men, know that we should take for granted that women are going to thrive and excel as athletes. And it makes my daughters look at themselves differently; to see that they can be champions too. So as a father, I want to say thank you and thank you to all the WNBA athletes who work hard each day to set a positive example to which all our daughters can aspire.

Congratulations again on your championship season. Good luck this year. And, Coach, congratulations.

Former Detroit Shock Head Coach William Laimbeer. Thank you.

The President. Congratulations. All right, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:50 p.m. on the South Portico at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Derrick A. "Rick" Mahorn, head coach, Katie Smith, guard, and Cheryl Ford, forward, Detroit Shock.

Remarks at a Reception Honoring World Ambassadors
July 27, 2009

Hello. Thank you very much. Well, I want to welcome all of you to the White House. Michelle and I are honored to host you here tonight to get to know you and to underscore the importance of cooperation between our nations.

Now, diplomacy has always been critically important to all nations. But in many ways, it grows more important with each passing year, because the interconnectedness of our world means that in the 21st century, we cannot solve our problems until we solve them together. For centuries, diplomats have come together to discuss war and peace, commerce and exchange. But now it is hard to think of an issue that matters to our people that does not depend in some way upon cooperation among nations: health and education, energy, the environment, the arts, and even athletics.

And that's one reason why I came into office with a strong commitment to renew American diplomacy and to start a new era of engagement with the world. This must be a moment when we engage on the basis of mutual interest and mutual respect, so that we can build new partnerships for progress. And it is in that spirit that I welcome all of you here tonight.

I'm also pleased that we've put together an extraordinary team to lead America's diplomacy. I have an extraordinary Secretary of State in Hillary Clinton. I'm so pleased to have Susan Rice, our talented Ambassador to the United Nations, here with us tonight, as well as our outstanding Trade Representative, Ron Kirk. And I couldn't be more proud of the job that American diplomats are doing around the world as well.

In the months and years ahead, I know that we are going to do important work with each of you. We will depend on you to connect us to your Government, to help make progress on our common challenges, and to build bridges among our people.

Of course, one of the wonderful things about America is that so much of the world is represented in our own cities and towns. I think we likely have immigrants who have come to our shores from every country that is represented here tonight. In fact, my own hometown of Chicago is probably pretty close to being able to make that claim all by itself. [*Laughter*]

I hope that you all know that this fact guides our respect for different peoples, for different cultures, and for different countries. For here in America we see the capacity for people from all corners of the world to come together to advance their common dreams.

Of course, I'm mindful that many of you have been in Washington longer than I have, so some of you already know your way around. But whether you've been here for years, or whether this is your first time in the White House, I hope you feel welcome. I look forward to working together to advance the peace and prosperity of the people not only of the United States but also people all around the world.

So thank you very much. Have a wonderful evening. We'll see you soon.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7 p.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 28.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session
July 28, 2009

The President. Thank you. Thank you so much. I am just going to provide some brief remarks, and then I want to hear from you.

It is wonderful to be here today. I want to thank Mike for moderating this discussion. I want to thank Jennie and Barry for their extraordinary leadership here at AARP.

Some of you may know that 44 years ago today, when I was almost 4 years old, after years of effort, Congress finally passed Medicare, our promise as a nation that none of our senior citizens would ever again go without basic health care. It was a singular achievement, one that has helped seniors live longer, healthier, and more productive lives; it's enhanced their financial security, and it's given us all the peace of mind to know that there will be health care available for us when we're in our golden years.

Today, we've got so many dedicated doctors and nurses and other providers across America providing excellent care, and we want to make sure our seniors, and all our people, can access that care.

But we all know that right now we've got a problem that threatens Medicare and our entire health care system, and that is the spiraling costs of health care in America today. As costs balloon so does Medicare's budget. And unless we act, within a decade—within a decade—the Medicare trust fund will be in the red.

Now, I want to be clear: I don't want to do anything that will stop you from getting the care you need, and I won't. But you know and I know that right now we spend a lot of money in our health care system that doesn't do a thing to improve people's health. And that has to stop. We've got to get a better bang for our health care dollar.

And that's why I want to start by taking a new approach that emphasizes prevention and wellness, so that instead of just spending billions of dollars on costly treatments when people get sick, we're spending some of those dollars on the care they need to stay well, things like mammograms and cancer screenings and immunizations, commonsense measures that will save us billions of dollars in future medical costs.

We're also working to computerize medical records, because right now too many folks wind up taking the same test over and over and over again because their providers can't access previous results. Or they have to relay their entire medical history—every medication they've taken, every surgery they've gotten—every time they see a new provider. Electronic medical records will help to put an end to all that.

We also want to start rewarding doctors for quality, not just the quantity, of care that they provide. Instead of rewarding them for how many procedures they perform or how many tests they order, we'll bundle payments so providers aren't paid for every treatment they offer with a chronic—to a patient with a chronic condition like diabetes, but instead are paid

for how are they managing that disease overall. And we'll create incentives for physicians to team up and treat a patient better together, because we know that produces better outcomes.

And we certainly won't cut corners to try to cut costs, because we know that doesn't work. And that's something that we hear from doctors all across the country. For example, we know that when we discharge people from the hospital a day early without any kind of coordinated follow-up care, too often they wind up right back in the hospital a few weeks later. If we had just provided the right care in the first place, we'd save a whole lot of money and a lot of human suffering as well.

Now, finally, we'll eliminate billions in unwarranted subsidies to insurance companies in the Medicare Advantage program, giveaways that boost insurance company profits but don't make you any healthier.

And we'll work to close that doughnut hole in Medicare Part D that's costing so many folks so much money. Drug companies, as a consequence of our reform efforts, have already agreed to provide deeply discounted drugs, which will mean thousands of dollars in savings for the millions of seniors paying full price when they can least afford it.

All of this is what health insurance reform is all about: protecting your choice of doctor, keeping your premiums fair, holding down your health care and your prescription drug costs, improving the care that you receive. And that's what health care reform will mean to folks on Medicare.

And we've made a lot of progress over the last few months. We're now closer to health care reform than we ever have been before. And that's due in no small part to the outstanding team that you have here at AARP, because you've been doing what you do best, which is organize and mobilize, and inform and educate people all across the country about the choices that are out there, pushing Members of Congress to put aside politics and partisanship, and finding solutions to our health care challenges.

I know it's not easy. I know there are folks who will oppose any kind of reform because they profit from the way the system is right now. They'll run all sorts of ads that will make people scared. This is nothing that we haven't heard before. Back when President Kennedy and then President Johnson were trying to pass Medicare, opponents claimed it was "socialized medicine." They said it was too much government involvement in health care, that it would cost too much, that it would undermine health care as we know it.

But the American people and Members of Congress understood better. They ultimately did the right thing. And more than four decades later, Medicare is still giving our senior citizens the care and security they need and deserve.

With the AARP standing on the side of the American people, I'm confident that we can do the right thing once again and pass health insurance reform and ensure that Medicare stays strong for generations to come.

So I'm hoping that I can answer any questions that you have here today. I'm absolutely positive that we can make the health care system work better for you, work better for your children, work better for your parents, work better for your families, work better for your businesses, work better for America. That's our job.

So thank you very much.

AARP Prime Time Radio Host Mike Cuthbert. Much as it would be every broadcaster's dream to share the podium with the President of the United States, he has to get wired up for sound. So I'll start with a question that was e-mailed in before the program, which combines a couple of factors you spoke about, Mr. President.

Health Care Reform/Health Insurance Providers/Preexisting Medical Conditions

He says: "My brother is 56 and uninsurable. He could afford to buy insurance, but he can't get it because he has a preexisting condition, and in his State, there is not a high-risk pool. When the President's program starts, will insurance companies be required to cover people with preexisting conditions? Will he be able to get insurance in the first phase of the plan, even if he's willing to pay the full amount?"

The President. The answer is yes. And so let me talk just a little bit about the kind of

insurance reform that we're proposing as part of the broader reform package.

Number one, if you've got a preexisting condition, insurance companies will still have to insure you. Now, this is something very personal for me. My mother, when she contracted cancer, the insurance companies started suggesting that, well, maybe this was a preexisting condition, maybe you could have diagnosed it before you actually purchased your insurance. Ultimately, they gave in, but she had to spend weeks fighting with insurance companies while she's in the hospital bed, writing letters back and forth just to get coverage for insurance that she had already paid premiums on. And that happens all across the country. We are going to put a stop to that. That's point number one.

Point number two, we're going to reform the insurance system so that they can't just drop you if you get too sick. They won't be able to drop you if you change jobs or lose your job, as long as you're willing to pay your premiums. They are—we're going to make sure that we eliminate sort of the lifetime cap that creates a situation—a lot of times people get sick, then they find out the fine print says that at a certain point they just stop paying, or they'll pay for your hospitalization but they don't pay for your doctor, or they pay for your doctor but not your hospitalization.

We want clear, easy to understand, straightforward insurance that people can purchase. So that's point number one.

Point number two is, in addition to those reforms, we want to make sure that we set up what's called a health insurance exchange so that anybody who wants insurance but can't get it on their job right now, they can go to this exchange; they can select a plan that works for them or their families—these are private-option plans, but we also want to have a public option that's in there—but whatever you select, you will get high-quality care for a reasonable cost, the same way Congress, Members of Congress, are able to select from a menu of plans that they have available. And if you're very—if the plan that you select is still too expensive for your income, then we would provide you a little bit of help so that you could actually afford the coverage.

So the idea behind reform is: Number one, we reform the insurance companies so they can't take advantage of you; number two, that we provide you a place to go to purchase insurance that is secure, that isn't full of fine print, that is actually going to deliver on what you pay for; number three, we want to make sure that you're getting a good bargain for your health care by reducing some of the unnecessary tests and costs that have raised rates.

Even if you have health insurance, your premiums have gone up three times faster than wages over the last 10 years. Your out-of-pocket costs have gone up about 62 percent, which means that for people who aren't on Medicare right now, people, let's say, 54 to—or 50 to 64, a lot of those folks are paying much higher premiums than they should be, hundreds or thousands of additional dollars that could be saved if we had a system that was more sensible than it is right now.

Health Care Reform/Medicare Benefits

Mr. Cuthbert. We go to Margaret in Greeley, Colorado, for our first tele-town call. Go ahead, Margaret. Margaret, are you there? Let me ask Margaret's question for her. She wants to keep her good coverage. Will it continue with the new plan?

The President. Here's a guarantee that I've made: If you have insurance that you like, then you will be able to keep that insurance. If you've got a doctor that you like, you will be able to keep your doctor. Nobody is trying to change what works in the system. We are trying to change what doesn't work in the system.

And this—let me also address, I think, a misperception that's been out there that somehow there is any discussion on Capitol Hill about reducing Medicare benefits. Nobody is talking about reducing Medicare benefits. Medicare benefits are there because people contributed into a system. It works. We don't want to change it. What we do want is to eliminate some of the waste that is being paid for out of the Medicare trust fund that could be used more effectively to cover more people and to strengthen the system.

So, for example, right now we're paying about $177 billion over 10 years to insurance companies to subsidize them for participating in Medicare Advantage. Now, insurance companies are already really profitable. So what we've said is, let's at least have some sort of competitive bidding process where these insurance companies who are participating, they're not being subsidized on the taxpayer dime; if they've got better services, if they have better services that they can provide to seniors rather than through the traditional Medicare program, they're free to participate, but we shouldn't be giving them billions of dollars worth of subsidies.

That's the kind of change that we want to see; that will strengthen Medicare. But nobody is talking about cutting Medicare benefits. And I just want to make that absolutely clear, because we've received some e-mails and some letters where people are concerned that that may happen.

Mr. Cuthbert. Our operators, by the way, are telling us that we have literally tons of questions from people worried about keeping the care they have. On the other hand, Ollie in Texas, you've got a concern on the other end.

Hi, Ollie.

Health Care Reform

Q. Hello.

Mr. Cuthbert. Go ahead.

Q. May I start now?

The President. Yes.

Q. Yes. Well, I am an AARP volunteer, an AARP member. I support AARP's position on health care reform, and I want to thank President Obama for making this a priority issue on his agenda also.

My question is, there are so many negative ads and so many negative articles about the tremendous cost for health care reform that is being proposed by different congressional committees.

The President. Right.

Q. What we don't hear is what the dollar amount would be if we do nothing. And I think this is very important because people are scared by the trillions of dollars, and I know that if we do nothing for the next 10 years, health care will still keep on rising. And I want to know if the President has any way of putting out some information as to what it would cost if we do nothing. Thank you.

The President. Well, look, I think this is a great question, Ollie, and so let me try to be as specific as I can about the costs of doing nothing.

I've already mentioned that health care costs are going up much faster than inflation. All right? So your wages, your income, if you're lucky, right now maybe they're going up 2 percent a year, maybe 3 percent a year. For a lot of people they're not going up at all because the economy is in tough shape. But your health care costs are still going up 6 percent a year, 7 percent a year. Some people are getting notices in their mail, their premium just went up 20 percent.

On that trajectory, health care costs will probably double again. Your premiums will probably double again over the next 10 years. They may even go up faster than that. The costs of Medicare are going to keep on rising a lot faster than tax revenues coming in, which means that the trust fund, you've got more money going out than is coming in, which makes that more unstable. And we know that if we do nothing, we will probably end up seeing more people uninsured.

We're already seeing 14,000 people lose their health insurance every day—14,000 people. So the costs of doing nothing are trillions of dollars in costs over the next couple of decades—trillions—not billions, but trillions of dollars in costs, without anybody getting any better care.

So what we've said is, if we can control health care inflation, the—how fast costs are going up, then not only can we stabilize the Medicare trust fund, not only can we help save families money on their premiums, but we can actually afford to provide coverage to the people who currently don't have health care.

Now, here's the problem, that in order for us to save money, in some cases, we've got to spend some money up front. Let me give you some very specific examples. Health care IT: Health care is the only area where you still have to fill out five different forms. I'll bet when you go into the bank you don't have to do that.

You've got an ATM. If you use your credit card, they'll find you real quick, and the billing is real easy—[*laughter*]—right? But for some reason, you go into health care, you fill out pencil and paper; I guess they Xerox it; they give it to somebody else. Sometimes you see their files and it's all stuffed with papers, and nurses can't read the doctor's handwriting.

So for us to set up a system like they have at the Cleveland Clinic that I just visited in Ohio, where every medical record—your privacy is protected, but everything is digitalized, everything—the minute you take a test, it goes to all the doctors and all the specialists that you might end up dealing with. So you end up just having that one test instead of having to then go back to the doctor again and again and again and have a bunch of different tests. Well, that saves money, but you've got to get the computer equipment in the first place to do it. So in some cases, we've got to spend some money on the front end.

I also think that if we provide coverage for people who don't have health insurance right now, then they are going to be getting preventive care, they're going to be getting screenings, and so they don't end up in the emergency room with really expensive care that all of us are paying for, even though we don't know it.

The average family is spending about $900 a year in higher health care premiums because they are paying indirectly for uncompensated care. Essentially, the insurance companies charge you a little more, and hospitals and doctors, they're all charging you a little bit more because they're not getting reimbursed for people who don't have any care whatsoever.

So what we've done is we've said, look, over 10 years, the health care reform proposals, to cover everybody, would cost about a trillion dollars over 10 years. So that's about $100 billion a year. Keep in mind we spend $2 trillion every year on health care, so this is just a fraction of what we spend. But we're talking about a trillion dollars over 10 years; that's $100 billion a year.

About 60 percent of that can be paid for by taking money that's already in the system but isn't working to make you healthier; that can pay for about 60 percent of it. So really what we're talking about is another 30 to 40 billion dollars every year to cover everybody, and we're going to get most of that money back if we're providing more prevention, more wellness, doctors and hospitals are being reimbursed more intelligently. Over time that money will—that investment will more than pay for itself.

But Ollie is exactly right, you get these stories where, oh, there's a trillion dollars here, a trillion dollars there, after a while it starts being real money, even here in Washington. And so I understand people being scared that this is going to be way too costly. It's not that costly if we start making changes right now.

Last point I would make, just to give you a sense of why I know that we can get savings in the system without over the long term spending more money: We spend about $6,000 per person more than any other industrialized nation on Earth, 6,000 more than the people do in Denmark or France or Germany or—every one of these other countries spend about—at least 50 percent less than we do, and you know what? They're just as healthy.

And I just had a doctor in my—in the Oval Office today who told me it's not because they're healthier; it turns out, they actually are generally older, and they smoke at a higher rate. And so in fact, their costs should be higher than ours. And yet they are spending $6,000 per person less than we are.

Now, that's money out of your pocket. If you're already retired, it's money that is out of your pocket because some of that money could have been going into your retirement fund instead of going to pay for your health care. If you're working right now, some of that money could be going into your paycheck instead of going into your health benefits right now. It's money that is being given away, and we need to save it. That's why health reform is so important.

Mr. Cuthbert. Let's go next to Illinois and talk with Caroline with her question. Caroline, you're on the tele-town hall.

Independent Medical Advisory Committee/ Medicare/Federal Deficit/Health Care Reform

Q. Thank you. Hello, Mr. President, from Joliet.

The President. Hi, Caroline. Good to—tell everybody in Joliet I said hi. [*Laughter*]

Q. I will, thank you. I came from our AARP prayer group/chapter meeting this morning, and I asked for questions. There were two big fears that were—that came out of the discussion. One had to do with the fear of losing a preferred insurance plan, which I think you've addressed to some extent this morning.

The President. Right.

Q. The other has to do with the knowledge that there will be millions of dollars of cuts in Medicare over the years to accommodate baby boomers. So the question is, does this translate into dictation of what can and cannot be given to a senior as service? For example, will there be fewer hip and knee replacements? Even if I decide when I'm 80 that I want a hip replacement, am I going to be able to get that? Am I going to be able to see a cardiologist or—if I have a heart condition—or other specialist? Or is that going to all be primary care?

I'm calling it rationing of care; I'm coining it that.

The President. Yes. No, I think it's an excellent question, Caroline, and I appreciate it because I do think this is a concern that people have generally.

My interest is not in getting between you and your doctor, although keep in mind, right now insurance companies are often getting between you and your doctor. So it's not as if these choices aren't already being made; it's just they're being made by private insurance companies, without any real guidance as to whether the decisions that are being made are good decisions to make people healthier or not. So what we've said is, we just want to provide some guidelines to Medicare, and by extension the private sector, about what works and what doesn't.

Some of you may have heard we wanted to set up what we're calling a IMAC, an independent medical advisory committee, that would, on an annual basis, provide recommendations about what treatments work best and what gives you the best value for your health care dollar. And this is modeled on something called MedPAC, which, by the way, Jennie, who is sitting right next to me, is currently on, and gives terrific recommendations every year about how we could improve care as to reduce the number of tests, or to make sure that we're getting more generic drugs in the system if those work and are cheaper, all kinds of recommendations like that. Unfortunately, right now they're just sitting on a shelf.

So we don't want to ration by dictating to somebody, okay, you know what, we don't think that this senior should get a hip replacement. What we do want to be able to do is to provide information to that senior and to her doctor about this is the thing that is going to be most helpful to you in dealing with your condition.

So let's say that person is diabetic. It turns out that if hospitals and doctors are providing reimbursements for a nurse practitioner or a social worker to work with that diabetic to control their diets and their medications, then they may avoid having to get a foot amputation. That's a good outcome. And by the way, that will save money. That saves Medicare money. And if we can save money on Medicare, that means that it's going to be more stable and more solvent over the long term.

So the thing that I'm—if I were—look, I think I'm scheduled to get my AARP card in a couple years. Is that right? [*Laughter*]

AARP Chief Executive Officer A. Barry Rand. Anytime you want one. [*Laughter*] Gladly.

The President. I know I'm automatically getting—associate member, right? Okay. [*Laughter*]

So if I was thinking about Medicare and making sure that I was secure, the thing that I would be most worried about right now is health care inflation keeps on going up and the trust fund in 10 years is suddenly in the red. And now Congress has to make some decisions: Are they going to put more money into Medicare, especially given the deficits and the debt that we already have? Or are they at that point going to start making decisions about cutting benefits but not based on any science or what's

making people healthier, they're just going to start making it based on politics?

And what we're saying is, we can avoid that scenario by starting to make some good decisions now about how do we improve care, make the system more rational, make it work better. That will actually stabilize and save Medicare over the long term.

One last point, because I think Caroline also raised the issue of we're taking some money out of Medicare. The only things that we're talking about have nothing to do with benefits. It has to do with things like subsidizing insurance companies, or, for example, right now we reimburse hospitals for the amount of time that you're there without checking to see if they're doing a good job in the first place. So they have no penalty. If you go into the hospital, they're supposed to fix you. Suddenly, you have to go back 3 weeks later. That hospital gets paid all over again, even though they didn't get it right the first time.

Now, if you got your car fixed at a mechanic, and 3 weeks later you had to go back, and you had to pay again to get your car fixed all over again, you'd be pretty mad, wouldn't you?

And yet when it comes to health care, that happens all the time. That happens all the time. And the hospital gets reimbursed for the second time or the third time, even though they didn't get it right the first time.

And so what we're saying is, let's incentivize the hospitals; we'll pay you a little bonus if the person is not readmitted because you got it right the first time. That will save money over the long term. Those are the kinds of changes we're talking about.

Mr. Cuthbert. We have been very geographically inspecific in our conversation so far, so let's get geographically specific by going to Jeanine in our audience. She's from Fairmont, Nebraska, and has a very relevant question.

Jeanine, welcome to the tele-town hall.

Health Insurance Providers/Health Care Reform

Q. Hi, Mr. President.

The President. Hi, Jeanine.

Q. I'm concerned about affordability and preexisting conditions, and I'm glad to hear you say what you have. My family and I live in rural Nebraska, and my husband and I are both—are self-employed, and we're paying—and he was originally denied because of a preexisting condition, and he's in a CHIPS pool. We're paying eight or nine hundred dollars a month, and we have an $8,000 deductible.

The President. Yes, that's tough.

Q. Yes, and it's, you know—and we've done this for about a year and a half. And we're not alone. There are a lot of people that do this.

The President. Well, Jeanine, you are a prime candidate for the health care exchange that I just described, because essentially what you would be able to do is you could just go online, you would be able to see a list of participating insurers, which by the way, is very important, because in most States right now insurance companies are dominated by—or the insurance market is dominated by just one or two insurers, so you don't have a lot of choices. And this way, you would have a lot of choices. They would all have to compete on the basis of price, but they'd be abiding by a certain set of rules, like you can't exclude somebody for a preexisting condition.

And so you could then select the plan that was best for you, do your own comparison shopping. And if you qualified, then we would provide you a little bit of help on your premiums to reduce your costs. So that's what essentially we could pay for if we take some of these inefficiencies and the waste out of the system right now. That will pay for you getting the kind of help you need, and we'd have insurance regulations in place that would protect you from being scammed in the insurance market, which, unfortunately, a lot of people suffer from.

The other reason that we can drive your costs down is you'd be part of a huge pool, right? Part of the reason why large companies are typically able to offer lower insurance premiums for their employees than small companies is they've got a big pool. The Federal Government is a classic example. The Federal Health Employees Program is a pretty good

deal because you've got several million people who are part of it. So that gives you a lot of bargaining power with the insurers. Well, the exchange will provide that same market power to help negotiate with the insurers to drive prices down.

And the other thing that we do want to do—now, this is controversial, and I understand some people are worried about this—we do think that it makes sense to have a public option alongside the private option. So you could still choose a private insurer, but we'd also have a public plan that you could choose from that would be non-for-profit, wouldn't have, hopefully, some of the same high administrative costs, and would be potentially more responsive to your needs at a lower cost. I think that helps keep the insurance companies honest because now they have somebody to compete with.

And I have to say, the reason this has been controversial is a lot of people have heard this phrase "socialized medicine," and they say, "We don't want Government-run health care; we don't want a Canadian-style plan." Nobody is talking about that. We're saying, let's give you a choice. You can choose the private marketplace or this other approach.

And I got a letter the other day from a woman; she said, "I don't want Government-run health care, I don't want socialized medicine, and don't touch my Medicare." [*Laughter*] And I wanted to say, well, I mean, that's what Medicare is, is it's a Government-run health care plan—[*laughter*]—that people are very happy with. But I think that we've been so accustomed to hearing those phrases that sometimes we can't sort out the myth from the reality.

Mr. Cuthbert. In our tele-town hall, we go next to Lawrence, Kansas, and talk with Mitzi. Mitzi, you're on the tele-town hall.

Health Insurance Providers/Health Care Reform

Q. Mr. President, thank you so much for doing the hard work of health care reform.

The President. Thank you, Mitzi.

Q. My question is, historically, older Americans, along with women of child-bearing age and persons with preexisting conditions, have paid more for health care coverage. And I want to know if reform will eliminate the disparity for older Americans.

The President. Well, the one thing that we strongly believe in is you can't discriminate in the insurance market. And that's actually what's happening right now. You're not seeing it in Medicare if you're already in Medicare, but if you're in the private marketplace right now, essentially insurance companies are cherry-picking. They want young, healthy people because they can collect premiums and don't have to pay out a lot. And then as people get older, then they start suddenly making it harder for those folks to get coverage. And if they do get coverage, it's wildly expensive.

And so part of the insurance reforms we want to institute is to make sure that there's what's called a community rating principle that keeps every insurer operating fairly so that they can't just select the healthy, young people. If they want to participate in, for example, this health care exchange, they've got to take everybody. And that will help, I think, reduce costs or level out costs for older Americans. And we also want to enshrine a principle in there that says no discrimination against women, because there is still oftentimes a gender bias in terms of some of the coverage that people receive.

Mr. Cuthbert. We go next to North Carolina for a question we had all week last week. I think every town hall had this one. It's from Colin. And, Colin, go ahead and ask this question. Go ahead, Colin.

Living Wills/Health Care Reform

Q. This is his wife, Mary.

The President. Hi, Mary.

Q. Hi.

The President. What happened to Colin? [*Laughter*]

Q. Well, I'm the one they talked to.

The President. I got you. That's how it is in my house too. [*Laughter*]

Q. I have heard lots of rumors going around about this new plan, and I hope that the people that are going to vote on this is going to read every single page there. I have been told there is a clause in there that everyone that's Medicare age will be visited and told to decide how they wish to die. This bothers me greatly, and I'd like

for you to promise me that this is not in this bill.

The President. You know, the—I guarantee you, first of all, we just don't have enough Government workers to send to talk to everybody, to find out how they want to die. I think that the only thing that may have been proposed in some of the bills—and I actually think this is a good thing—is that it makes it easier for people to fill out a living will.

Now, Mary, you may be familiar with the principle behind a living will, but it basically is something that my grandmother—who, you may have heard, recently passed away—it gave her some control ahead of time, so that she could say, for example, if she had a terminal illness, did she want extraordinary measures even if, for example, her brain waves were no longer functioning, or did she want just to be left alone. That gives her some decisionmaking power over the process.

The problem is, right now most of us don't give direction to our family members, and so when we get really badly sick, sadly enough, nobody is there to make the decisions. And then the doctor, who doesn't know what you might have preferred, they're making decisions, in consultation with your kids or your grandkids, and nobody knows what you would have preferred.

So I think the idea there is to simply make sure that a living will process is easier for people. It doesn't require you to hire a lawyer or to take up a lot of time. But everything is going to be up to you. And if you don't want to fill out a living will, you don't have to. But it's actually a useful tool, I think, for a lot of families to make sure that if, heaven forbid, you contract a terminal illness, that you are somebody who is able to control this process in a dignified way that is true to your faith and true to you—how you think that end-of-life process should proceed.

You don't want somebody else making those decisions for you. So I actually think it's a good idea to have a living will. I'd encourage everybody to get one. I have one; Michelle has one. And we hope we don't have to use it for a long time, but I think it's something that is sensible.

But, Mary, I just want to be clear: Nobody is going to be knocking on your door; nobody is going to be telling you you've got to fill one out. And certainly nobody is going to be forcing you to make a set of decisions on end-of-life care based on some bureaucratic law in Washington.

Mr. Cuthbert. Mr. President, she mentioned, not in her question, but in her preview, that she's talking about Section 1232, the infamous page 425, which is being read as mandatory end-of-life care advice and counseling for Medicare. As I read the bill, it's saying that Medicare will, for the first time, cover consultation about end-of-life care, and that they will not pay for such a consultation more than once every 5 years. This is being read as saying every 5 years you'll be told how you can die.

The President. Well, that would be kind of morbid. [*Laughter*] I think that the idea in that provision, which may be in the House bill—keep in mind that we're still having a whole series of negotiations, and if this is something that really bothers people, I suspect that Members of Congress might take a second look at it. But understand what the intent is: The intent here is to simply make sure that you've got more information, and that Medicare will pay for it.

So, for example, there are some people who—they get a terminal illness, and they decide at a certain point they want to get hospice care. But they might not know how to go about talking to a hospice, what does it mean, how does it work. And they don't want to—we don't want them to have to pay for that out of pocket. So if Medicare is saying you have the option of consulting with somebody about hospice care, and we will reimburse it, that's putting more power, more choice in the hands of the American people, and it strikes me that that's a sensible thing to do.

Mr. Cuthbert. We go to Denver, Colorado, next, and Sarah, another doughnut hole question. Go ahead, Sarah.

Pharmaceutical Industry/Cost of Prescription Drugs/Health Care Reform

Q. Hi, this is my first year in the doughnut hole, and it's quite a frightening thing to go

through. I have Parkinson's so I will be going through it year after year, and it looks like I could last about 2 years, and then all of my savings will be gone to the doughnut hole. So what do you intend to replace the doughnut hole with?

The President. Well, we wanted to replace it with prescription drugs that won't force you to use up all your retirement. When the original Medicare Part D was put forward, first of all, it wasn't paid for, so it automatically was unstable financially. Then there was an agreement that you couldn't negotiate with the drug companies for the cheapest available price on drugs. The American people pay about 77 percent more for drugs than any other country—77 percent—almost twice as much as other countries do.

So what we've said is, as part of reform, let's negotiate with the pharmaceutical companies; we'll cover more people—that means potentially the pharmaceuticals will have more coverage—or more customers—but as part of the deal, they've got to start providing much better discounts on their drugs. They've already committed that if the health care reforms pass, they would provide $80 billion worth of discounts. That would be enough to cover about half of the doughnut hole.

So right off the bat, right now, without further negotiations, the drug companies have already committed that they would reduce—they would cut in half the costs that folks have to go through when they're in the doughnut hole right now. That's money directly in their pocket that could be in their retirement savings.

I think we can get potentially an even better deal than that, because we're overpaying 77 percent. But the problem is, if we don't get health care reform, the pharmaceutical industry is going to fight for every dime of profits that they're currently making, and filling that doughnut hole is going to be very expensive, because when the Medicare Part D was originally passed, nobody put in provisions to pay for it, and so putting even more money into it at a time when Medicare may go bankrupt—not "go bankrupt," but go into the red 10 years from now—that's a big problem. That's part of the reason why reform is so important.

And I think for AARP members especially, there are hundreds of thousands of people out there who would directly benefit from reduced prescription drug costs if we're able to pass this bill.

Mr. Cuthbert. As you know, you may have heard the cost of the program is a concern. Jane here in our audience has a question about that. From Alexandria, Virginia, Jane.

Independent Medical Advisory Committee/ Health Care Reform

Q. Hello, Mr. President. My question is some concern we have about the possibility of a cost containment commission, if you could comment on that.

The President. The idea is not the cost—it's not a cost containment commission that's been proposed. It's been what I just described, an independent medical advisory committee modeled on the kind of committee that is called MedPAC right now. It's got people who are health care experts, nurses, doctors, hospital administrators. The idea is how do you get the most value for your health care dollar.

Now, the objective is to control costs. But it's not cost containment by just denying people care that they need. Instead, it's reducing costs by changing the incentives and the delivery system in health care so that people are not paying for care that they don't need. The more we can reduce those unnecessary costs in health care, the more money we have to provide people with the necessary costs, the things that really pay high dividends in terms of people becoming healthier.

And this is pretty straightforward. I mean, it's pretty logical. If you think about your own family budget, if you could figure out a way to reduce your heating bill by insulating your windows, then that money that you saved—you're still warm inside; you're just as comfortable as you were—it's just you're not wasting all that energy and sending it in the form of higher bills to the electric company or the gas company. And that's then money that you can use to save for your retirement or help your kid go to college.

Well, it's the same principle within the health care system. If we can do the equivalent of

insulating some windows and making the house more efficient, you're still going to be warm; you're just going to be able to save some money. In this case, you're still going to be healthy; you will just have saved some money, and that money then we can use to lower your prescription drug costs, for example.

Health Care Reform

Mr. Cuthbert. We have an Internet question next from Alpharetta, Georgia. Robert asks: "If the new health care reform bill is so great for all Americans, why are Members of Congress and other arms of Government excluded from having to participate?"

The President. Well, I actually think that the health care exchange that people like Jeanine would be able to participate in would be very similar to the kind of program that we have for the Federal health care employees.

But keep in mind, I mean, this is something that I can't emphasize enough: You don't have to participate. You don't—if you are happy with the health care that you've got, then keep it. If you like your doctor, keep it. Nobody is going to go out there and say, "You've got to change your health care plan."

So this is not like Canada, where suddenly we are dismantling the system and everybody's signed up under some Government program. All we're doing is we're saying, if you've already got health care, the only thing we're going to do for you is we're going to reform the insurance companies so that they can't cheat you, and we are—if you don't have health insurance, we're going to make it a little bit easier for you to be able to obtain health care. And hopefully, overall, we are going to change the delivery systems so that we are saving money as a society over the long term.

So nobody is being forced to go into this system, and frankly the—if we do this right, then all we're actually doing is giving the American people the same option that Members of Congress have, because they've got a pretty good deal right now. I mean, the fact of the matter is, is that they don't have to worry about losing their health insurance. They have a bunch of options and different plans to select from. So if they've got a good deal, why shouldn't you? All right.

Mr. Cuthbert. We hope that you've found this tele-town hall with President Obama, AARP CEO A. Barry Rand, and AARP President Jennie Chin Hansen to be informative, interesting, helpful, and stimulating of further discussion. If you have a personal story you'd like to share with us about the impact the high cost of health care has had on your family, please stay on the line to leave us a message. Be sure to leave your contact information so we can get back to you.

Now for some closing remarks, let's get back to Barry Rand. Barry.

Mr. Rand. Well, I want to thank you again, Mr. President, for joining us, listening to our members, whether they're here in person or on the phone or on the web, and for hearing their stories, and getting a chance to talk directly and answer their questions. So we thank you very much for that.

The President. Thank you. Well, I just want to say thank you to all of you for taking the time to get informed on this issue. And I want to thank AARP for all the good that it has done to provide greater security and stability in the lives of people who are older.

You know, this week celebrates the anniversary of Medicare, and when you look at the Medicare debate, it is almost exactly the same as the debate we're having right now. Everybody who was in favor of the status quo was trying to scare the American people saying somehow that Government is going to take over your health care; you won't be able to choose your own doctor; they're going to ration care; they're going to tell you, you can't get this or that or the other. And you know what? Medicare has been extraordinarily popular; it has worked; it has made people a lot healthier, given them security. And we can do the same this time.

Sometimes I get a little frustrated because this is one of those situations where it's so obvious that the system we have isn't working well for too many people and that we could just be doing better. We're not going to have a perfect health care system; it's a complicated system. There are always going to be some

problems out there. But we could be doing a lot better than we're doing right now. We shouldn't be paying 50 percent more, 75 percent more than other countries that are just as healthy as we are. We shouldn't have prescription drugs 77 percent higher in costs than ours. And we shouldn't have people who are working really hard every day without health care or with $8,000 deductibles, which means they basically don't have health insurance unless they get in an accident or they get really sick.

That just doesn't make sense. And the stories I get are heartbreaking, all across the country, from people who are just having a really tough time, and it's going to get tougher. So we've got to have the courage to be willing to change things. I know that sometimes people have lost confidence in the country's ability to bring about changes, but I think this is one of those times where we've really got to step up to the plate, and it will, ultimately, make Medicare stronger, as well as the whole health care system stronger.

So thank you very much, everybody.

Mr. Cuthbert. One of the most difficult parts of working on an effort like health care reform is to keep in touch and keep up to date. May we suggest a web site: healthactionnow.org, that's healthactionnow—all one word—dot org. It will tell you how to get in touch with your Congressman and the people who are debating this whole issue and tell you how to keep involved until the very end, which we hope is soon.

Mr. President, Mr. CEO, Madam President, and everybody here and at home on the teletown hall, we thank you all for participating. Keep up the good work, and we'll talk with you again. I'm Mike Cuthbert in Washington. Have a good day.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. at AARP Headquarters.

Statement on the 56th Anniversary of National Korean War Armistice Day
July 28, 2009

The freedom, security, and prosperity that we enjoy as a nation exists only because of the heroic and selfless sacrifices of America's service men and women. Today we owe special remembrance to the veterans of the Korean war and especially the United States and Allied combatants who made the ultimate sacrifice in Korea. For their courageous actions in pursuit of freedom and democracy for the Korean Peninsula, these dedicated men and women deserve our unending respect and gratitude.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Raleigh, North Carolina
July 29, 2009

The President. Hello, North Carolina. Thank you so much. Thank you. All right, please, everybody, have a seat. Have a seat. I am so excited to be back in Raleigh, to be back in North Carolina. This is a community and a State that has been so good to me. And I know that part of the reason is because I travel with one of your homeboys, Reggie Love. But I hope it's more than that.

A couple of people I want to acknowledge very quickly. First of all, I just want to thank Sara Coleman for the wonderful introduction. Give her a great round of applause. She brought me a cupcake factory T-shirt, but no cupcakes. [*Laughter*] I mean, I know I've been talking about health care a lot, but I think cupcakes are good for your health—[*laughter*]—so next time.

I also want to acknowledge the Broughton High School Jazz Ensemble. I want to thank Gardner Taylor for the invocation, Tom Gill for the Pledge of Allegiance, Chelsea Cole for the national anthem, Del Burns, our Wake County Public Schools superintendent. I want to thank Stephen Mares, the Broughton High School principal.

I want to thank your own Governor, Bev Perdue, who is here. Unfortunately, Senator Kay Hagan, Senator Richard Burr, and Congressman Brad Miller can't be here because they're all working hard in Washington. Give them a big round of applause. We also have the Raleigh mayor, Charles Meeker, is here. Where's Charles? There he is right here. We've got the speaker of the house right here. Give them a big round of applause. I hear that the former Governor, Jim Hunt, is in the hallway. All right? There are a lot of elected officials. I'm starting to get into trouble—[*laughter*]—so I'm going to stop there and just say thank you to all of them for their outstanding service.

It is not only great to be back in Raleigh, it is also nice to get out of Washington. [*Laughter*] With all the noise and the fussing and the fighting that goes on, it's pretty easy for the voices of everyday people to get lost and for folks to forget why they're there.

So when I took office in January, I asked to receive 10 letters—to see 10 letters from people across the country every day. They're just selected by the mailroom. We get about 40,000 letters a day; they send me about 10 a day, and I read through them. And they're—some of them are heartbreaking, people talking about the tough times they're going through; some of them are inspiring. Most of the letters these days are about one thing, and that's the economy. So this is a town hall meeting, but before I take your questions, I want to spend a few minutes just talking about where we are and where we need to go on the economy.

I don't know whether you've seen the latest cover of Newsweek magazine on the rack at the grocery store, but the cover says, "The Recession is Over." Now, I imagine that you might have found the news a little startling. [*Laughter*] I know I did. Here is what's true: We have stopped the freefall. The market is up, and the financial system is no longer on the verge of collapse; that's true. We're losing jobs at half the rate we were when I took office 6 months ago. We just saw home prices rise for the first time in 3 years. So there's no doubt that things have gotten better.

We may be seeing the beginning of the end of the recession, but that's little comfort if you're one of the folks who've lost their job and haven't found another. Unemployment in North Carolina is over 10 percent today. A lot of small businesses like Sara's are still struggling with falling revenue and rising costs. Health care premiums, for example, are rising twice as fast as wages and much more for small businesses, something that I'll talk about a little bit later. So we know the tough times aren't over. But we also know that without the steps we had—have already taken, our troubled economy, and the pain it's inflicting on North Carolina families, would be much worse.

So let's look at the facts. When my administration came into office, we were facing the worst economy of our lifetimes. We were losing an average of 700,000 jobs per month. It was nearly impossible to take out a home loan or an auto loan or a student loan and loans for small business to buy inventory and make payroll. And economists across the ideological spectrum, conservatives and liberals, were fearing the second coming of a great depression.

Now, at the time, there were some who thought that doing nothing was somehow an option. I disagreed. We knew that some action was required. We knew that ending our immediate economic crisis would require ending the housing crisis, where it began, or at least slowing down the pace of foreclosures. And that's why we took unprecedented action to stem the spread of foreclosures by helping responsible homeowners stay in their homes and pay their mortgages. We didn't stop every foreclosure, we couldn't help every single homeowner who had gotten overextended, but folks who could make their payments with a little bit of help, we were able to keep them in their homes.

Ending this immediate crisis also required taking steps to avert the collapse of our financial system, which, as Federal Chairman Bernanke said the other day, was a real possibility. Now, let me just say this about banks. I know it didn't seem fair to many Americans to use tax dollars to stabilize banks that took reckless risks and helped to cause this problem in the

first place. It didn't seem fair to me either. And even though the bank bailout began under the previous administration, and I wasn't always happy with the lack of accountability when it was first begun, I do believe that it was actually necessary to step in, because by unlocking frozen credit markets and opening up loans for families and businesses, we helped stop a recession from becoming a depression. And by the way, taxpayers are already being paid back by the banks, with interest.

We also took steps to help a struggling auto industry emerge from a crisis largely of its own making. Again, some folks thought, why are we doing that? There was a strong argument to let General Motors and Chrysler go under, and I know many of you probably share that view. And if we had been in ordinary times, not teetering on the brink of depression, we might have exercised other options, because if you make a series of bad decisions that undermine your company's viability, the folks back here, they probably wouldn't get bailed out; your company wouldn't be in business. And many folks didn't see why these companies should be treated any differently. But in the midst of a recession, their collapse would have wreaked even worse havoc across our economy.

So I said if GM and Chrysler were willing to do what was necessary to make themselves competitive, and if taxpayers were repaid every dime they put on the line, it was a process worth supporting. We saved hundreds of thousands of jobs as a result, and we expect to get our money back.

Now, even as we worked to address the crisis in our banking sector, in our housing market, in our auto industry—and by the way, there was a flu that came by during that process—[*laughter*]—we also began attacking our economic crisis on a broader front. Less than 1 month after taking office, we enacted the most sweeping economic recovery package in history. And by the way, we did so without any earmarks or wasteful pork barrel projects, pet projects that we've become accustomed to. Not one was in there.

Now, there was a lot of misinformation about the Recovery Act or the stimulus, whatever you want to call it. So let me just lay out the facts, because I think some folks are confused. As I was driving in, everybody was—there were some folks cheering, and then there were some folks with signs. [*Laughter*] So I hope they're paying attention, because I want to make sure everybody understands exactly what the Recovery Act was all about.

To date, roughly a quarter of the Recovery Act's funding has been committed, over 30,000 projects have been approved, thousands have been posted online as part of an effort to uphold the highest standards of transparency and accountability when it comes to our economic Recovery Act.

Now, the Recovery Act is divided into three parts. And I know a lot of people think, "Oh, this is just blowing up government and wasting money." Let me describe exactly where this money went, just so if your friends or neighbors talk to you, you can give them the right information.

One-third of the entire Recovery Act is for tax relief for you, for families and small businesses—one-third of it. Ninety-five percent of you got a tax cut. You may not notice it—[*laughter*]—because it's appearing in your paycheck on a weekly basis—every time you get a paycheck, as opposed to you getting a lump sum. Because it turned out that by spreading it out, it had more of a potential to stimulate the economy. That's what the economists advised us to do. But a third of it is going to tax breaks to individuals and small businesses. That's money in your pocket to buy cupcakes and other necessities of life. [*Laughter*]

So for Americans struggling to pay rising bills with shrinking wages, we have kept a campaign promise to put a middle class tax cut in the pockets of 95 percent of working families. That began showing up in your paycheck about 3 months ago. We also cut taxes for small businesses on the investments that they make.

So just remember this: One-third of it—if you think about the recovery, it was a little under $800 billion—a third of it went to tax cuts. And all those folks who are complaining about growing government and all that stuff, we are actually cutting your taxes, giving your money back so you can spend it. That's a third.

Another third of the money in the Recovery Act is for emergency relief that is helping folks who have borne the brunt of this recession. For Americans who were laid off, we expanded unemployment benefits, a measure that's already made a difference for 12 million Americans. So we extended unemployment insurance; that's made a difference in 12 million Americans, including 300,000 folks here in North Carolina who would have been cut off from unemployment insurance if we hadn't extended it.

We're making health insurance 65 percent cheaper for families who were relying on COBRA while looking for work. So let me just see a show of hands. How many people know what COBRA is? All right. So you know that if you lose your job, you're allowed to keep your health insurance by paying premiums through COBRA. Here's the problem: If you've lost your job and your premium is $1,000 right at a time when you've got no job, it's hard to come up with that money, right? So what we did in the recovery package was to say, we're going to give—65 percent of those costs we will pick up so that you can keep your health insurance while you're looking for a job.

And for States who were facing historic budget shortfalls—I was just talking to the Governor and the speaker—we provided assistance that has saved the jobs of tens of thousands of teachers and police officers and firefighters. So that's the second third. I just want to remind everybody: first third, tax cuts; second third was providing emergency relief to families who had lost their jobs, for their insurance, and to support them with unemployment insurance, and States that otherwise would have billions of dollars in shortfalls.

Now, that's two-thirds of the money of the Recovery Act. And if we hadn't put that in place, imagine the situation that people would be going through right now. It would be a lot worse, and the States would be going through a lot tougher times, having to make cuts that they don't want to make.

All right, so this brings us to the last third, and this is where the critics will say, "Okay, well, maybe we agree with the tax cuts, maybe we agree with the assistance to the States and individuals, but what about that last third, all those investments?" Well, you know what? We decided that the last third should be for short-term and long-term investments that are putting people back to work and building a stronger economy for the future.

And I want you to know this money is not being wasted. We're seeing the results of these investments here in Raleigh and across North Carolina. The Beltline is being resurfaced between Wake Forest Road and Wade Avenue. The Raleigh-Durham Airport is renovating its runways. The city of Raleigh's transit system is building a new operations and maintenance facility. Over 500 people are going to work as part of a summer youth work initiative. Water treatment plants are being renovated throughout the Triangle.

These are the kinds of projects being launched across the country to rebuild crumbling roads and highways and bridges and waterways, with the largest new investment in our national infrastructure since Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System in the 1950s. And that puts people to work right away, but it also creates a long-term, sustainable economic future.

Now, I know that there are some critics in Washington—maybe out there—[*laughter*]—they say, "Well, you've been too slow getting these projects started." They're saying we should have broken ground on all our highway projects on the first day. Well, that's impossible, especially because I wanted to be sure we did our homework and invested our tax dollars only in those projects that actually created jobs and jump-started our economy.

So we knew that it was going to take a few months before these projects got on line. That takes time, if you're going to do it right. And we've already eliminated wasteful projects that didn't meet this test, because every taxpayer should have the assurance that we're investing their hard-earned tax dollars responsibly.

So just remember, if somebody asks you about the stimulus or the recovery: One-third of it is in your pocket in tax cuts; one-third of it is unemployment insurance relief, help on COBRA, and making sure that States don't have to make cuts that would make things

worse; one-third of it, investments in roads and bridges, putting people back to work. So it will take time to achieve a complete recovery. We're not going to rest until anyone who's looking for work can find a job. But there should be little debate that the steps we took, taken together, have helped stop our economic freefall.

That's the story of the first 6 months. It's cost some money to do this, although I've got to say, when I hear critics talk about out-of-control spending, I start scratching my head. I can't help but remember those same critics contributed to a $1.3 trillion deficit that I inherited when I took office. I mean, seriously. I'm now President, so I'm responsible for solving it, but I do think we shouldn't have a selective memory—[*laughter*]—in terms of spending habits. You hand me a $1.3 trillion bill, and then you're complaining 6 months later because we haven't paid it all back. [*Laughter*] A debt, by the way, that was partially a result of two tax cuts that went primarily to the wealthiest few Americans and a Medicare drug program that wasn't paid for. These are the same folks who are now complaining about, well, health care, we can't afford health care. You passed the prescription drug plan, didn't pay for it, handed the bill to me. [*Laughter*]

Now, because of that debt, a lot of people are saying we can't go any further in tackling our problems; we definitely can't do health care, too much debt, too big deficits. Look, I understand the concern about debt. I have to—I'm looking at these spreadsheets every day. We dug ourselves a deep hole. And because of the recovery package that we put together, that has added to it. So we now have problems. We're going to have to tighten our belt. But we can't do it in the middle of the stimulus. We can't do it in the middle—just as the economy is coming out of recession. No economist would recommend that.

And I do understand people who feel like they've had to cut back, so why shouldn't the government have to cut back; why start a new government program now? So let me just explain why the health of the American people and the American economy demands health insurance reform. I want to just explain briefly reform, what it will mean for you, and then we'll start taking questions.

First of all, nobody is talking about some government takeover of health care. I'm tired of hearing that. I have been as clear as I can be. Under the reform I've proposed, if you like your doctor, you keep your doctor. If you like your health care plan, you keep your health care plan. These folks need to stop scaring everybody. You know? Nobody is talking about you forcing—to have to change your plans.

But if you're one of the 46 [million]* Americans who don't have coverage today, or you've got that coverage where you've got a $10,000 deductible, so it's basically house insurance, it's not health insurance—[*laughter*]—you pay the premiums so you won't lose your house if you get hit by a bus, heaven forbid, then you'll finally be able to get quality, affordable coverage.

But what a lot of chatter out there hasn't focused on is the fact that if you've got health insurance, then the reform we're proposing will also help you because it will provide you more stability and more security. Because the truth is, we have a system today that works well for the insurance industry, but it doesn't always work well for you. So what we need, and what we will have when we pass these reforms, are health insurance consumer protections to make sure that those who have insurance are treated fairly and insurance companies are held accountable.

Let me be specific. We will stop insurance companies from denying you coverage because of your medical history. I've told this story before. I will never forget watching my own mother as she fought cancer in her final days worrying about whether her insurer would claim her illness was a preexisting condition so they could wiggle out of paying for her coverage. How many of you have worried about the same thing? A lot of people have gone through this. Many of you have been denied insurance or heard of someone who was denied insurance because they've got—had a preexisting condition. That will no longer be allowed with reform. Now, we won't allow that. We won't allow that.

* White House correction.

With reform, insurance companies will have to abide by a yearly cap on how much you can be charged for your out-of-pocket expenses. No one in America should go broke because of an illness. We will require insurance companies to cover routine checkups and preventive care, like mammograms and colonoscopies and eye and foot exams for diabetics, so we can avoid chronic illnesses that cost not only lives but money. No longer will insurance companies be allowed to drop or water down coverage for someone who's become seriously ill. That's not right; it's not fair. We will stop insurance companies from placing arbitrary caps on the coverage you can receive in a given year or in a lifetime.

Now, so my point is, whether or not you have health insurance right now, the reforms we seek will bring stability and security that you don't have today, reforms that will become more and more urgent with each passing year. So in the end, the debate about reform boils down to a choice between two approaches. The first is projected to double your health care costs over the next decade, make millions more Americans uninsured, bankrupt State and Federal governments, and allow insurance companies to run roughshod over consumers. That's one option. That's called the status quo. That's what we have right now.

I want everybody to understand this: If we do nothing, I can almost guarantee you your premiums will double over the next 10 years, because that's what they did over the last 10 years. It will go up three times faster than your wages, so a bigger and bigger chunk of your paycheck will be going into health insurance. It will eat into the possibility of you getting a raise on your job, because your employer is going to be looking and saying, "I can't afford to give you a raise because my health care costs just went up 10, 20, 30 percent." And Medicare, which seniors rely on, is going to become more and more vulnerable. On current projections, Medicare will be in the red in less than 10 years.

So that's the status quo. When everybody goes around saying, "Why is Obama taking on health care," that's the answer. That's one option. I don't like that option. You shouldn't either. That plan doesn't sound too good. That's the health care system we have right now. So we can either continue with that approach, or we can choose another approach, one that will gradually bring costs down, will improve quality and affordability for every American when it comes to their health care, and will help get our exploding deficits under control. That's the health care system we can bring about with reform.

So back in Washington, there's been a lot of talk about the politics of health care, and who's up and who's down, and what it will mean for my party if this—will my Presidency be damaged severely if we don't pass health care. I keep on saying to people, I've got health care. [*Laughter*] This is not for me.

Here in North Carolina, you know this isn't about politics. This is about people's lives. This is about people's businesses. This is about the future. I want our children and our grandchildren to look back and say this is when we decided to take the politics out of it and start doing something for the future of this country. I'm going to need your help, Raleigh; let's go do it.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much. All right. I was getting fired up there at the end. [*Laughter*] Okay. So this is the town hall portion.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Sorry, I can't hear you, sir. Sir, I'll be happy to take your question, but—all right, I'll be happy to take your question, but maybe let's do it in an orderly fashion. Thank you, sir; we appreciate you.

Where was I? Here's what we're going to do. We're going to go girl, boy, girl, boy. [*Laughter*] We're going to go around the room. I'm going to try to take as many questions as I can. If you can keep your answers short—or your questions short, I'll try to keep my answers short. And just raise your hand. I won't be able to get to everybody. There are people with microphones in the audience, so if you can wait until somebody with a microphone finds you, that way we'll be able to hear your questions. People with the microphones, can you wave, just so I can see you? All right, there they are.

All right, so I said girl, boy, girl, boy. We'll start with this young lady right here. Here—she's coming with the microphone—the one in the white blouse. And please introduce yourself if you don't mind. Why don't you stand up so everybody can see you?

Shortage of Primary Care Physicians

Q. Okay. I'm so honored to be here, and thank you for taking my question first. Wow, I'm really nervous. I guess I want to ask, as the wife——

The President. What's your name?

Q. My name is Kim.

The President. Hey, Kim.

Q. And I'm here from the Chapel Hill area.

The President. Great.

Q. As the wife of a family physician, we see people not only coming into that specialty less and less often but also leaving that specialty because it's so, so hard as a young family to make that work: long hours, not great reimbursement, not great pay, with huge amounts of debt when you come out of medical school. So what are you thinking of to entice more people to come into that specialty? Because you can insure every person in America and if there's not a physician there to see that person, you still don't have health care. So what are you going to do to entice people to come——

The President. This is a great question. And so let me—just so everybody understands what we're talking about here, it used to be that the most common type of doctor was the family physician. You'd go in, and they knew you, and they knew your family. And every once in a while, you'd go to a specialist, but basically you were dealing with a family doctor. Increasingly, the economics of being a primary care physician or a family doctor is a bad deal for a lot of medical students, because they come out with hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt.

But it turns out that a primary care physician, as Kim just pointed out, their reimbursement rates are lower; the system doesn't reimburse for things like preventive care. If they stop one of their patients from smoking, they don't get reimbursed for that, but they do get reimbursed if they're a surgeon and they have to open up somebody's chest. Now, actually that first part of it is probably more valuable to the person's health and to the society as a whole, but if it's not rewarded, then fewer and fewer people go into that branch of medicine.

If we pass health reform, when we pass health reform, then what we're going to—and more people now have access to the system, it is going to be vital that we increase the number of primary care physicians. The best way for us to do it is twofold. One is to change how we reimburse, changes in the delivery system. So what we're trying to do is we're trying to say, in all these systems, insurance companies, they should reimburse for preventive care. If a health system is making sure that a diabetic is taking their meds or monitoring their diet, they should get reimbursed for that, not just getting reimbursed for the $30,000 foot amputation after somebody gets into real medical trouble. So one thing to do is to change reimbursement so that the incomes of primary care physicians are more comparable with specialists.

The second thing is to provide scholarships and financial incentives for young medical students who are willing to go into the primary care field. If you combine those two things—[*applause*]—if we combine those two things, then we can change, I think, the incentives for a lot of doctors so that we get more and more primary care physicians.

All right? Okay. It's a man's turn. All right, this gentleman right here. We've got to find a mike for you.

Medicare and Medicaid

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. My brother is—he has a family of four and two children. His daughter is a disabled child, MS, and he receives Medicaid. He managed—he works a job—he managed to save $3,000, and at this point, Medicaid stopped all benefits helping him. And I want to know, does your health care plan include reforms for the Medicaid system and these kind of injustices?

The President. Well, it's—we have reforms for Medicare and Medicaid in terms of the delivery system. Now, what you're referring to is benefit levels and how they're calculated, and that has not been the central focus of the reform initiatives we've been putting forward.

We're going to have to examine some of those benefit mechanisms. I have to tell you, though, it's always a little bit tricky because, on the one hand, you're right that your brother should be able to save up some money for emergencies or for a college fund or what have you and not suddenly lose all their—the Medicaid benefits. On the other hand, we've got to make sure that Medicaid isn't used by people who could afford to pay for health care themselves. So trying to find that balance is always difficult.

Without looking at your brother's particular situation, I could not tell you exactly what needs to be done to modify it. But I do think that both under Medicaid and Medicare, we can make the system more efficient, and we can encourage better practices that will reduce the costs overall, so that would reduce costs for taxpayers and reduce costs for your brother. And that is a goal, I think, that is a win-win for everybody. It's not going to solve all these problems, but it's important.

Okay, I'm going to turn back to one of these small businesses. It's a lady's turn, though, sorry. [*Laughter*] So we got one right here.

Public Health Insurance

Q. Mr. President. Is this on?

The President. Yes.

Q. My name is Patty Briguglio. I own a company called MMI public relations. I have 20 employees, and I provide health care benefits for them. And so I wouldn't blow it, I've written down my question. What current long-term social program created and run by the government should we look to as a model of success and one that we as taxpayers should feel confident that a new government-run health care system would be better than the current system in place? In other words, what are you going to do differently?

The President. Good. Well, let me say this. Just in the health care arena, I'd point to two areas: Medicare and the VA are both government-run health care programs that have very high satisfaction rates. Generally, if you look at surveys, they have actually very high satisfaction rates.

Now, the VA, because it's a self-contained system, meaning that people see patients year after year, because they're not—it's not dependent on what job they have, they can actually do some things in terms of prevention and wellness and some of the things that I just talked about that have helped to lower their costs and improved quality of care in a pretty impressive way.

Medicare is a different situation, because seniors really like Medicare generally; they appreciate the security that it provides. And by the way, we're in the 44th anniversary of the passage of Medicare. Prior to that, senior citizens were extraordinarily vulnerable. And so it is a successful program.

The problem with Medicare is the same problem that we have with the health care system generally, which is, health care inflation has driven costs up. That's not unique to Medicare. In fact, this is something that's important to know, that health care inflation under Medicare has actually gone down at a—has actually increased at a lower rate than in the private sector. All right?

So let me repeat what I just said, because everybody always says, well, government can't run anything. Medicare costs have gone up more slowly than health care costs in the private sector. So the private insurance that you're getting, you've actually seen your premiums go up faster than Medicare has cost taxpayers, even though seniors have high satisfaction rates with Medicare.

Now, having said all that, it's all relative. Medicare still needs to be a lot better and more efficient. And there are examples of how we can make the entire health care system more efficient. We know where these examples are: the Mayo Clinic, the Cleveland Clinic, Geisinger, Kaiser Permanente. There are health systems around the country that actually have costs that are as much as 20 or 30 percent lower than the national average and have higher quality.

And so the question is, why is that? What is it that they're doing differently than other systems? And there are some patterns that start coming into place. For example, number one is that they have a patient-focused practice where instead of worrying about how they're getting—how they're billing—so how many

tests they're ordering or how many procedures they're ordering—all they're focused on is the patient. And they—part of what helps is their doctors are all on salaries, so they don't even know what the economics of any decisions that they're making are.

Then it turns out you also have a group practice so that when you come in, the family physician, your primary care physician, has already coordinated with all the specialists. So instead of having to go to four different doctors and four different tests, you go take one trip and you see all of them all at once, and they all help diagnose you and coordinate your care throughout the process.

They've got health information technologies so that when you take a test, it actually gets forwarded to the next doctor and the next doctor and to the nurse and the pharmacist so that there aren't any errors. So there are a whole range of practical things that they're doing that are improving quality and lowering costs at the same time.

Now, there's no reason that we can't duplicate that in both private and public settings across the board. But in order to do that, we're going to have to change how we reimburse for exams. So we've got to say to doctors and hospitals, we're not going to reimburse you for the number of tests you provided; we're going to reimburse you instead for the quality of the outcome.

Here's another example. Right now we just reimburse hospitals no matter how many times they readmit you. Now, if you took your car to the shop and they fixed it, or you thought they fixed it, and then 2, 3 weeks later you go back in and they're having to do the same thing, you wouldn't feel good about paying twice for the exact same thing that you thought had been fixed. But under Medicare there is no penalty to hospitals for having very high readmission rates compared to their peers. So those are the kinds of things that can be changed.

Now, your broader question may just be, I don't have confidence in government. But as I pointed out—I just want to go back to my original point—Medicare costs have gone up more slowly than private sector health care costs. That is documented.

Cost of Health Care Reform

Q. I'm sorry. If you do say that we know Medicare has this problem, that they're paying for readmittance, why don't we reform that now? That's a government program. Why are we allowing that?

The President. That's exactly what I want to reform. No, no, maybe I'm just—I don't understand your question. That's exactly the changes that we want to make. Those are exactly the changes that we want to make. That's what we're proposing.

And what happens when we propose that is, then people start trying to scare you by saying—I mean, I've got seniors right now who are writing to me—let me address the seniors in the audience. I've been getting letters, people saying, "I hear that you're going to take my Medicare away." I've received letters that say, "I don't want a government-run program, I don't want socialized medicine, and by the way, don't touch my Medicare." [*Laughter*] No, I do.

Because what's happened is, in this debate, on the one hand, people are worried about change; they're nervous that even though they may not be satisfied with what they have, what we create might be worse. And every proposal that you make, it's very easy to use scare tactics to make people think that you're going to lose your Medicare, we're going to ration your care, et cetera, this is going to cost way too much.

And so part of my job is just to try to get the facts in front of people. I want to make these reforms that you just talked about as part of the overall change in health care. And by the way, here's an important point: You've been hearing these figures that say it's going to cost a trillion dollars for this new health care program, so then of course people think, well, we can't afford that; a trillion dollars, that's a lot of money. First of all, just to keep it in perspective, that's a lot less than we spent on the war in Iraq, but that's—but it's still a lot of money. Two-thirds of the cost to cover everybody in America, two-thirds of it, could actually be paid for by money that's already in the health care system that taxpayers are paying that's being wasted.

So let me give you an example: One hundred and seventy-seven billion dollars over 10 years

is spent on subsidies to insurance companies under something called Medicare Advantage. There's no showing that seniors are healthier using Medicare Advantage than using regular Medicare, but taxpayers, you fork over an additional $177 billion to them over 10 years. You take that out, that right there helps pay for millions of people who could get coverage.

So we've already identified five to six hundred billion dollars worth of savings that are already being spent by taxpayers that would help pay for the reforms that we're talking about. But you wouldn't know that from watching the news. And by the way, that—so a trillion dollars is over 10 years, so that's $100 billion a year, 600,000—$600 billion of it already paid for by money that you're already using—that's already being used, but just not used wisely in the health care system. That's what we're talking about. And for that we can have 40 million people who don't have health insurance getting health insurance.

And small businesses, if you're already paying health insurance—so you're already paying; you would get a tax credit. We're putting $43 billion on the table to help reduce your costs directly, for your care. So small—95 percent of small businesses would benefit from subsidies, if they're already providing health insurance for their employees.

And if they're not providing health insurance for their employees—the problem is, small businesses typically have a much tougher time getting health insurance, and they pay higher premiums because you've got a smaller pool. You're only 20 people; it's not like some big Fortune 500 company with a thousand people; they can drive a harder bargain. You'll be able now to join and access health care through a health care exchange that we set up so that you're able to be part of a pool that can leverage lower prices.

This is not something that is impossible to do, but we've got to overcome the understandable skepticism that somehow Washington can never get anything right. I mean, that's the biggest challenge we have right now, is just people sort of generally have skepticism about Washington. And I—look, I understand that. That's why I ran for President, because I was skeptical about what was happening in Washington.

All right, it's a man's turn. This gentleman right up in front here. He's got a—he looks quite popular. Everybody was pointing at him.

Cost of Prescription Drugs

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President. My name is Bill Purcell. I'm one of those primary care doctors you were talking about, a pediatrician. I also have a little job in the North Carolina Senate. [*Laughter*] But I can see in my practice a patient and make a correct diagnosis and prescribe the right medicine, but if a patient can't afford the medicine, they don't get treatment. What can we do about the high cost of prescription drugs in America?

The President. We—since I gave a very long answer on the last one, I'll try to keep this one short. We pay 77 percent more for prescription drugs in America than any other country does—77 percent more than any other country. Now, if you talk to the pharmaceutical industry, they'll say, well, a lot of the research and development is done in this country, and that's how we're developing the great new drugs. That accounts for maybe 25 to 30 percent of the difference in the cost. The rest of it has to do with marketing. It has to do with the fact that, basically, the pharmaceutical industry can get away with it.

And what happened when the prescription drug bill was passed several years ago under Medicare, they specifically prohibited you negotiating—they prohibited Medicare from negotiating with the drug companies for the cheapest available price on drugs, specifically said you cannot negotiate. So what we've said is, in this reform process, we are going to turn that around.

And to the pharmaceutical industry's credit, they have sat down and started negotiating, and they've already said—they've already put $80 billion in deep discounts and rebates on the table that would help to close the so-called doughnut hole that a lot of seniors are suffering under Medicare. They've already committed to that. That would cut the costs of the doughnut hole in about half. So that's a

significant savings. I think we can obtain more savings.

One other thing that's being debated right now on Capitol Hill, though, that people need to keep an eye on—one of the ways to lower prescription drug costs is to move to generics. And the problem right now is, is that the drug companies want—after they've come up with a drug, they want to keep that patent for 12 years. And there's a debate about can we lower that to 7 years before it goes generic so that people can enjoy lower prices on those drugs.

Those are some of the debates that will be taking place alongside the health care reform debate. But overall, there's no reason why we should not be able to at least pay in the ballpark of what other countries are paying for the exact same drug, and that will be a major focus in this health care reform legislation. All right? It's a woman's turn—young lady right there who's on the rail.

Impact and Cost of Health Care Reform

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President.

The President. Good afternoon.

Q. First, I wanted to thank you for your Supreme Court nomination—I mean, appointment.

The President. She's going to do well.

Q. And all the hard work that you've been doing on the economy and with the health care reform. I had the opportunity with my family last year to meet you in Bristol, Virginia. My father gave you the cane to help you out doing the health care reform. But my current question is, I consider myself an average American. I worked for a corporate 500 company for 25 years and been unemployed for the past 2 years. And I prepared to teach mathematics in the middle school system in my hometown in Virginia, which I haven't gotten the opportunity to do that yet, but I volunteered in the school system and on your campaign. So my question is, I believe that most average Americans are for the health reform, but they are afraid of change. So what would you say to the average American, what do you believe the impact or the cost impact is to the average person that needs health care?

The President. All right. If you already have health care, if you've already got health insurance, then I can't guarantee that immediately you'll have—your premiums will go—be cut in half, but what I can guarantee is, is that your costs will be lower than if we don't have reform. I believe that strongly.

So the—if we can just get to the point where your premiums are going up as fast as your wages or your profits or your income, that would be a pretty good deal. Most people would take that. And I think that we can start bending the curve on our costs.

I can definitely guarantee, if you've already got health insurance, that you won't be barred from getting health insurance because of a preexisting condition; you won't lose your health insurance if you change jobs or you lose your job; you'll have more security in the health insurance that you have than you do now. That will be written into the legislation. That will be part of the overall reform process.

I can also say with some certainty that if we pass this health care reform proposal, that not only will millions of Americans who don't have health insurance be getting insurance, but it will be much easier for small-business owners to provide health insurance for their employees and to get health insurance for themselves. Because a lot of small businesses, it's not just a matter of getting insurance for your employees, it's also just finding insurance yourself. If you're self-employed, good luck trying to find insurance right now. And by being able to buy it through a health insurance exchange, you will then be part of a broader group that has leverage over the insurance companies and will be able to get a better deal for you.

So bottom line is, your costs certainly will not go up, and they very well could go down, depending on the kind of insurance that you have right now. And if you've got health insurance, we're not going to ask you to change it.

Now, it is true—just full disclosure here—that, remember, I said two-thirds of this can be paid for through savings in the system already? If we're going to cover everybody, then we've still got to pay for that one-third. And that's not an inconsequential amount. That's somewhere around $30 billion a year over the

next 10 years. And there are a bunch of different ways of paying for it.

I've suggested that we could pay for it just by reducing the itemized deductions for people who make over $250,000 a year, like myself. And that right there would pay for it. There are other suggestions that are out there, and we are still debating those in Washington. The one thing that I've said is we're not going have middle class folks bear that burden. They can't afford it right now.

So for the average American, you stand to gain significantly if you don't have health insurance. If you do have health insurance, you will have more security. And if you're a small business, you will be in a better position to provide health insurance for yourself and your employees over the long term.

All right, I've got time for one more question. And this gentleman right here has been waiting a long time.

Congressional Review of Health Care Legislation

Q. How are you doing, Mr. President?

The President. Good.

Q. Thank you for everything you're doing and dealing with, from my heart.

The President. Thank you.

Q. This is more a political question than a technical question. I wondered—I hear a lot, especially the opposition, complaining that they don't have time to read these thousands of pages from your health care plan. And I was wondering, on the one hand, we've been in this—all this has existed for a long time; what difference does a couple of months, so we allow them to read it? And we just, you know, we just don't hear that anymore.

The President. Good. Well, let me just say this about, sort of, the politics of health care reform. First of all, this bill, even in the best case scenario, will not be signed—we won't even vote on it probably until the end of September or the middle of October. We're just trying to get it—all these different bills out of committee. So that means that any one of these Senators, if they want to take this bill home with them during the August recess, they would have more than enough time to read it.

So, second point: We've been debating this for 40 years now. So some of the folks are—sincerely want to get it right, and we want to give them enough time to get it right. We don't want to just do it quickly; we want to do it right. But some folks who specifically said on the other side, the more we can delay, the better chance we have of killing the bill, because what happens in Washington is the longer it takes, the more the special interests can start getting in there and trying to knock it down. But——

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Well, we did give them a deadline, and, sort of, we missed that deadline, but that's okay. We are—here is my promise—and by the way, I've been keeping my promises since I got into office. We will not sign—I will not sign a health care bill that is not deficit neutral, that is not paid for. I will not sign a bill that does not have all the reforms that we need to lower health care inflation over the long term. We will not sign a bill that isn't right for the American people.

Q. Public option, public option.

The President. I'm for the public option.

So I just want everybody to know, Congress will have time to read the bill. They will have time to debate the bill. When we—they will have all of August to review the various legislative proposals. When we come back in September, I will be available to answer any question that Members of Congress have. If they want to come over to the White House and go over line by line what's going on, I will be happy to do that.

We are not trying to hide the ball here. We're trying to get this done. But the American people can't wait any longer. They want action this year. I want action this year. And with your help, we're going to make it happen, North Carolina.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:05 p.m. at Broughton High School. In his remarks, he referred to Personal Aide to the President

Reginald L. Love; Sara Coleman, owner, Cupcake Shoppe Bakery, who introduced the President; Rev. Gardner C. Taylor, senior pastor emeritus, Concord Baptist Church of Christ in Brooklyn, NY; Tom E. Gill III, incoming junior class president, and Chelsea M. Cole, student, Broughton High School; Joe Hockney, speaker, North Carolina State House of Representatives; and Supreme Court Associate Justice-designate Sonia M. Sotomayor.

Statement on Congressional Action on Health Care Reform Legislation
July 29, 2009

I want to thank the Members of both the Senate and House of Representatives for continuing their work on health reform to provide more stability and security for Americans who have insurance and quality, affordable coverage for those who don't. I'm especially grateful that so many Members, including some Blue Dogs on the Energy and Commerce Committee, are working so hard to find common ground. Those efforts are extraordinarily constructive in strengthening this legislation and bringing down its cost.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Food Safety Legislation
July 30, 2009

Today the House of Representatives passed H.R. 2749, the "Food Safety Enhancement Act of 2009," legislation that will raise food safety standards, allow the FDA to issue mandatory recalls of harmful products, and enhance our oversight of imported food.

This action represents a major step forward in modernizing our food safety system and protecting Americans from food-borne illness. Those are the goals of the Food Safety Working Group I convened in March and charged with making recommendations to improve our food safety system. And that is why we announced a new rule to control Salmonella contamination in eggs and are working to reduce the presence of harmful pathogens such as E. coli in meat and produce, strengthen our capacity to trace the source of outbreaks, and update our emergency operations procedures.

I commend the House of Representatives for its action today and look forward to working with the Senate to enact critical food safety legislation.

Statement on a Discussion With Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Sergeant James Crowley
July 30, 2009

I am thankful to Professor Gates and Sergeant Crowley for joining me at the White House this evening for a friendly, thoughtful conversation. Even before we sat down for the beer, I learned that the two gentlemen spent some time together listening to one another, which is a testament to them. I have always believed that what brings us together is stronger than what pulls us apart. I am confident that has happened here tonight, and I am hopeful that all of us are able to draw this positive lesson from this episode.

NOTE: The statement referred to Henry Louis Gates, Jr., director, W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University; and James Crowley, sergeant, City of Cambridge Police Department, MA.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Actions of Certain Persons To Undermine the Sovereignty of Lebanon or Its Democratic Processes and Institutions
July 30, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency declared with respect to the actions of certain persons to undermine the sovereignty of Lebanon or its democratic processes and institutions is to continue in effect beyond August 1, 2009.

In the past 6 months, the United States has used dialogue with the Syrian government to address concerns and identify areas of mutual interest, including support for Lebanese sovereignty. Despite some positive developments in the past year, including the establishment of diplomatic relations and an exchange of ambassadors between Lebanon and Syria, the actions of certain persons continue to contribute to political and economic instability in Lebanon and the region and constitute a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared on August 1, 2007, to deal with that threat and the related measures adopted on that date to respond to the emergency.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
July 30, 2009.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks During a Meeting With President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines and an Exchange With Reporters
July 30, 2009

President Obama. Well, let me express my thanks and appreciation for the visit from President Arroyo. As we discussed during our meeting here and our delegations, the relationship between the United States and the Philippines dates back many years. It is a friendship that is forged not only in treaties and trade relationships and military relationships, but it is also strengthened by very personal ties that exist between our two countries. We are proud to have 4 million persons of Filipino ancestry contributing to our country each and every day, in all walks of life. The fact that we have Filipino veterans who have fought side by side with American soldiers on behalf of freedom, all those things have strengthened the relationship between our two countries.

I am very pleased that President Arroyo has made such good progress on dealing with counterterrorism issues. She has initiated a peace process in Mindanao that we think

is—has the potential to bring peace and stability to a part of the Philippines that has been wracked by unrest for too long. We are very grateful of the strong voice that the Philippines has provided in dealing with issues in Asia, ranging from the human rights violations that have for too long existed in Burma, to the problems that we're seeing with respect to nuclear proliferation in North Korea.

I am looking forward to my travels to Southeast Asia, and the Philippines will be the coordinating country in the U.S. relationship with ASEAN, the primary organization—strategic organization for Southeast Asian countries. And in addition, the Philippines will be chairing the nonproliferation treaty conference that will be taking next—place next year.

And so we're going to have a busy agenda together working to reduce the threat of nuclear weapons, improving the multilateral partnerships in Asia that can create greater security and greater prosperity for all countries. And in addition, we continue to be grateful for the outstanding contributions that the Philippines has made with respect to U.N. peacekeeping around the world.

So although the Philippines is not the largest of countries, it, in using a phrase from boxing, punches above its weight in the international arena, and we are very grateful that President Arroyo has visited us here today. And we are looking forward to using this meeting as a way of launching even greater cooperation between our two countries in the years to come.

President Macapagal-Arroyo. Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you for inviting me to have this very important conversation here in the White House.

The U.S. is very essential to the economic, diplomatic, and national security of our country. We are very thankful for the U.S. as an important ally in helping to professionalize our military and making it more effective.

Just as important, we are thankful to the U.S. for being such a good ally in our—working on soft power by helping us build bridges, roads, schools, not only in Mindanao but across the nation. And this assistance of the U.S. has gone a long way in helping us to achieve what we have been able to achieve in the peace process in Mindanao in southern Philippines, and also in our fight against terrorism.

I was very happy to let President Obama know that the Muslim secessionists have agreed, together with a Philippine Government panel, to work towards a resumption of formal peace talks, and we're very thankful for the international community, including the U.S., for their assistance in bringing us to this stage.

Internationally, we stand foursquare behind the United States on the position that it has taken with regard to Burma and with regard to North Korea's nuclear adventurism.

We also applaud President Obama for his leadership on climate change, which is so important to the Philippines because we are an archipelagic country and severe climate change is going to be disastrous for our country. We are already feeling the weather pattern changes in the rising seas.

We are also—finally, may I say that I bring the thanks also of our Filipino veterans for the inclusion of the veterans' benefits in the fiscal stimulus package, something that we have all waited for as a country for the last 60 years.

So I'm very grateful for this opportunity. We thank the Obama administration for the new engagement in our part of the world, and indeed, we look forward to a stronger relationship between the U.S. and ASEAN and, bilaterally, a stronger relationship with our two countries.

Thank you, Mr. President.

President Obama. Thank you so much.

Okay, we're going to take two questions, one from a Filipino reporter.

President Macapagal-Arroyo. Yes.

President Obama. Yes, this gentleman right here. Is this a good candidate, Madam President?

President Macapagal-Arroyo. [*Laughter*] Yes—a very prestigious——

President Obama. Go ahead.

President Macapagal-Arroyo's Impression of President Obama/Philippines-U.S. Relations

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President, and President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. I am from the Philippine media, sir. It's noted that you're the first Asian head of state to be afforded by President Obama this—such an invitation. As

much as this is your first time to see President Obama in person and you have talked to him, could you kindly share to us, Madam President, your impressions of the American President? [*Laughter*]

President Obama. I'm sure she thinks I'm much younger looking than she expected. [*Laughter*]

President Macapagal-Arroyo. Well, as a person, President Obama is very cordial, warm, and welcoming. And I'm really very impressed about—of his deep understanding and knowledge of the Philippines and the Filipino people—the understanding of the close relationship within the Filipino people and the American people.

And we, I think, we connected very well also on our position with regard to Burma and Aung San Suu Kyi, with regard to North Korea and nuclear proliferation, with regard to human rights and terrorism. And we welcome President Obama's reaching out to the Muslim world, and also we are very pleased about his—the importance that he accords to engagement with our part of the world.

President Macapagal-Arroyo/Philippines-U.S. Relations

Q. Is it considered to be ungrateful if I will not get your reaction? It will be greatly appreciated if you can also give your impression of our President.

President Obama. Well, obviously, President Arroyo has done outstanding work on a whole range of issues. She mentioned the areas where the United States and the Philippines are of one accord, but as evidenced here today, she's somebody who knows the issues. She has experience leading the Philippines through some very difficult times. She has expressed a great friendship towards the United States, and aside from her great personal charm—[*laughter*]—we are very appreciative of the concrete ways in which her administration has pursued strengthening ties with the United States. So I'm very grateful for that.

Okay, Jeff Mason [Reuters].

Gross Domestic Product/President Obama's Meeting With Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Sergeant James Crowley

Q. Yes, sir. A double-barreled question for you: First of all, what do you expect to be the main message of the GDP figures that come out tomorrow? And second of all, what do you think will be the main message of your meeting tonight in the Rose Garden?

President Obama. On GDP, I don't have a crystal ball, and I haven't received the figures yet, but I think if you look at the consensus of economists right now, it confirms that we have seen a significant slowing down of the contraction over the last several months. There are a lot of indicators out there that tell us that job losses, although still way too high, are not at the pace that we were seeing in January or February. Housing prices went up for the first time in 3 years. The credit system, the banking system, the financial markets generally have settled down. You're not seeing the huge volatility or panic that you were seeing. And so all of that is a sign that we have stepped away from the precipice. As Ben Bernanke and others across the ideological spectrum have indicated, we were in a position where we could have gone into a great depression. I think those fears have abated.

But I suspect that the GDP numbers will still show that the economy contracted in the second quarter, that job loss is still a huge problem. And you don't have to read GDP numbers to see that, all you got to do is talk to the American people who are still losing jobs, losing homes, and worried about their ability to keep their health care and finance their child's college educations. So we're not going to rest until we have seen not just a technical improvement in GDP but until the American people's job prospects, their incomes have rebounded, and that's going to take some time.

With respect to tonight, you know, I am, I have to say, fascinated with the fascination about this evening. As you know, this idea was prompted when I was talking to Sergeant Crowley, and he said, "Well, maybe I'll have a beer in the White House some day," and I

said, "Well, you know, I'm sure that can be arranged."

I notice this has been called the "beer summit." It's a clever term, but this is not a summit, guys. This is three folks having a drink at the end of the day and hopefully giving people an opportunity to listen to each other. And that's really all it is.

This is not a university seminar. It is not a summit. It's an attempt to have some personal interaction when an issue has become so hyped and so symbolic that you lose sight of just the fact that these are people involved, including myself, all of whom are imperfect. And hopefully instead of ginning up anger and hyperbole, everybody can just spend a little bit of time with some self-reflection and recognizing that other people have different points of view. And that's all it is.

And so I will be surprised if you guys all make this the lead as opposed to a very important meeting that we just had with one of our most important partners in the world, but the press has surprised me before. [*Laughter*]

All right guys. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:47 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Federal Reserve Chairman Ben S. Bernanke; Henry Louis Gates, Jr., director, W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University; and James Crowley, sergeant, City of Cambridge Police Department, MA. President Macapagal-Arroyo referred to Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League of Democracy in Burma. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 31.

Remarks on the National Economy
July 31, 2009

Well, I just wanted to say a few words about the economic numbers that we received this morning. The gross domestic product, or GDP, is a measure of our overall economic growth as a nation. This morning the GDP revealed that the recession we faced when I took office was even deeper than anyone thought at the time; it told us how close we were to the edge.

But the GDP also revealed that in the last few months, the economy has done measurably better than we had thought, better than expected. And as many economists will tell you, that part of the progress is directly attributable to the Recovery Act. This and other difficult but important steps that we've taken over the last 6 months have helped us put the brakes on the recession.

We took unprecedented action to stem the spread of foreclosures by helping responsible homeowners stay in their homes and pay their mortgages. We helped revive the credit markets and open up loans for families and small businesses. And we enacted a Recovery Act that put tax cuts directly in the pockets of middle class families and small businesses, extended unemployment insurance and health insurance for those who've lost their jobs, provided relief to struggling States to prevent layoffs, and made investments that are putting people back to work building bridges and roads, schools and hospitals.

Now, I realize that none of this is much comfort to those Americans who are still out of work and struggling to make ends meet. And when we receive our monthly jobs report next week, it's likely to show that we're still continuing to lose far too many jobs. As far as I'm concerned, we won't have a recovery as long as we keep losing jobs. And I will not rest until every American who wants a job can find one.

But history does show that you need to have economic growth before you have job growth. And today's GDP is an important sign that the economy is headed in the right direction and that business investment, which had been plummeting in the last several months, is showing signs of stabilizing. This means that eventually, businesses will start growing, and they'll start hiring again. And that's when it will truly feel like a recovery to the American people.

This won't happen overnight. As I've said before, it took us many more months to fully dig ourselves out of a recession that we now know was even deeper than anyone thought. But I

will continue to work every single day and take every step that's necessary to make sure that happens. I also intend to make sure that we don't return to an economy where our growth is based on inflated profits and maxed-out credit cards, because that doesn't create a lot of jobs. We need a robust growth based on a highly educated, well trained workforce, health care costs that aren't dragging down businesses and families, and clean energy jobs and industries. That's where our future is, and that's where the jobs are.

Now, one of the steps we've taken to boost our economy is an initiative known as Cash for Clunkers. Basically, this allows folks to trade in their older, less fuel-efficient cars for credits that go towards buying fewer, more—newer, more fuel-efficient cars. This gives consumers a break, replaces dangerous carbon pollution and our dependence on foreign oil, and strengthens the American auto industry. Not more than a few weeks ago, there were skeptics who weren't sure that this Cash for Clunkers program would work. But I'm happy to report that it has succeeded well beyond our expectations and all expectations, and we're already seeing a dramatic increase in showroom traffic at local car dealers.

It's working so well that there are legitimate concerns that the funds in this program might soon be exhausted. So we're now working with Congress on a bipartisan solution to ensure that the program can continue for everyone out there who's still looking to make a trade. And I'm encouraged that Republicans and Democrats in the House are working to pass legislation today that would use some Recovery Act funding to keep this program going, funding that we would work to replace down the road. Thanks to quick bipartisan responses, we're doing everything possible to continue this program and to continue helping consumers and the auto industry contribute to our recovery.

So I'm very pleased with the progress that's been made in the House today on the Cash for Clunkers program. I am guardedly optimistic about the direction that our economy is going. But we've got a lot more work to do. And I want to make sure that all the Americans out there who are still struggling because they're out of work or not having enough work know that this administration will not rest until the movement that we're seeing on the business side starts translating into jobs for those people and their families.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:23 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Legislation to Fund the CAR Allowance Rebate System
July 31, 2009

I want to thank leaders in the House of Representatives for working quickly and in a bipartisan way to pass legislation that will use Recovery Act funds to keep Cash for Clunkers going.

This program has been an overwhelming success, allowing consumers to trade in their less fuel-efficient cars for a credit to buy more fuel-efficient new models. It has given consumers a much needed break, provided the American auto industry an important boost, and is achieving environmental benefits well beyond what was originally anticipated.

The program has proven to be a successful part of our economic recovery and will help lessen our dangerous dependence on foreign oil, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving the quality of the air we breathe. I urge the Senate to act with the American consumers in mind to pass this important legislation.

The President's Weekly Address
August 1, 2009

Today I'd like to talk with you about a subject that I know is on everybody's mind, and that's the state of our economy. Yesterday we received a report on our Gross Domestic Product; that's a measure of our overall economic performance. The report showed that in the first few months of this year, the recession we faced when I took office was even deeper than anyone thought at the time. It told us how close we were to the edge.

But it also revealed that in the last few months, the economy has done measurably better than expected. And many economists suggest that part of this progress is directly attributable to the Recovery Act. This and the other difficult but important steps that we have taken over the last 6 months have helped put the brakes on this recession.

We took unprecedented action to stem the spread of foreclosures by helping responsible homeowners stay in their homes and pay their mortgages. We helped revive the credit markets and opened up loans for families and small businesses. And we enacted a Recovery Act that puts tax cuts directly into the pockets of middle class families and small businesses, extended unemployment insurance and health insurance for folks who have lost their jobs, provided relief to struggling States to prevent layoffs of teachers and police officers, and made investments that are putting people back to work rebuilding and renovating roads, bridges, schools, and hospitals.

Now, I realize that none of this is much comfort for Americans who are still out of work or struggling to make ends meet. And when we receive our monthly job report next week, it's likely to show that we are continuing to lose far too many jobs in this country. As far as I'm concerned, we will not have a recovery as long as we keep losing jobs, and I won't rest until every American who wants a job can find one.

But history shows that you need to have economic growth before you have job growth. And the report yesterday on our economy is an important sign that we're headed in the right direction. Business investment, which had been plummeting in the past few months, is showing signs of stabilizing. This means that eventually, businesses will start growing and hiring again. And that's when it will really feel like a recovery to the American people.

This won't happen overnight. As I've said before, it will take many more months to fully dig ourselves out of a recession, a recession that we've now learned was even deeper than anyone thought. But I'll continue to work every day and take every step necessary to make sure that happens. I also want to make sure that we don't return to an economy where our growth is based on inflated profits and maxed-out credit cards, because that doesn't create a lot of jobs. Even as we rescue this economy, we must work to rebuild it stronger than before. We've got to build a new foundation strong enough to withstand future economic storms and support lasting prosperity.

Next week, I'll be talking about that new foundation when I head to Elkhart County in Indiana, a city hard hit not only by the economic crisis of recent months but by the broader economic changes of recent decades. For communities like Elkhart to thrive, we need to recapture the spirit of innovation that has always moved America forward.

That means once again having the best educated, highest skilled workforce in the world. That means a health care system that makes it possible for entrepreneurs to innovate and businesses to compete without being saddled with skyrocketing insurance costs. That means leading the world in building a new clean energy economy with the potential to unleash a wave of innovation—and economic growth—while ending our dependence on foreign oil. And that means investing in the research and development that will produce the technologies of the future, which in turn will help create the industries and jobs of the future.

Innovation has been essential to our prosperity in the past, and it will be essential to our prosperity in the future. But it's only by building a new foundation that we will once again harness that incredible generative capacity of

the American people. All it takes are the policies to tap that potential, to ignite that spark of creativity and ingenuity which has always been at the heart of who we are and how we succeed. At a time when folks are experiencing real hardship, after years in which we've seen so many fail to take responsibility for our collective future, it's important to keep our eyes fixed on that horizon.

Every day I hear from Americans who are feeling firsthand the pain of this recession. These are folks who share their stories with me in letters and at town hall meetings, folks who remain in my mind and on my agenda each and every day. I know that there are countless families and businesses struggling to just hang on until this storm passes. But I also know that if we do the things we know we must, this storm will pass, and it will yield a brighter day.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:35 p.m. on July 31 in the Red Room at the White House for broadcast on August 1. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 31, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on August 1.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Health Care Reform Legislation
August 1, 2009

I'm pleased that the third and final House committee working on health reform legislation has successfully passed a bill that would provide quality, affordable health insurance for all Americans. This historic step by the House Energy and Commerce Committee moves us closer to health insurance reform than we have ever been before. The bill that they have passed will strengthen consumer protections and choice, while lowering costs and improving care, underscoring the broad consensus among all of the bills that have emerged in Congress.

As in other committees, this bill was strengthened by a debate that allowed all voices to be heard, including those of Progressives, Blue Dog Democrats, and Members of both the Democratic and Republican caucuses. I particularly want to thank Chairman Waxman and Chairman Emeritus Dingell for their leadership. Over the next few weeks, we must build upon the historic consensus that has been forged, and do the hard work necessary to seize this unprecedented opportunity for the future of our economy and the health of our families.

Statement on the Recovery of the Remains of Captain Michael S. "Scott" Speicher in Iraq
August 2, 2009

The news that Captain Speicher's remains have been recovered is a reminder of the selfless service that led him to make the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. As with all our service men and women considered missing in action, we remain steadfast in our determination to bring our American heroes home. I am grateful to the Marines who pursued the information that led to Captain Speicher's recovery so that he can now come home.

My thoughts and prayers are with his family, and I hope that the recovery of his remains will bring them a needed sense of closure.

NOTE: The statement referred to Capt. Michael S. "Scott" Speicher, USN, who was lost in action on January 17, 1991, and whose remains were recovered in Iraq's Anbar Province in July.

Remarks at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia
August 3, 2009

Hello. Thank you. Please, have a seat. Good morning, everybody. It is wonderful to see all of you, and wonderful to have one of the best partners that anybody could have in elected office, our Vice President, Joe Biden—thrilled to have him here.

I want to thank Staff Sergeant Miller for the gracious introduction. I want to thank President Merten for his hospitality. There are a couple of people here who deserve all the credit, because they got a very tough bill done, and part of the reason they were able to get it done was just because of their extraordinary personal credibility. These are—one is new to the Senate, and one had been there a while, and yet together they formed an incredibly formidable team. They're both class acts. Please give a big round of applause to Virginia's own, John Warner and Jim Webb.

I know that we've got a number of Member of Congress who are here, and I want to thank them all for their outstanding work. I want to point out that Senator Mark Warner could not be here, but we appreciate him. We've got the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, a hero in his own right, General Eric Shinseki, and I want everybody to please acknowledge him. And of the original bill sponsors who could not be here today, we've got Senator Chuck Hagel, Senator Frank Lautenberg, Representative Harry Mitchell, Representative Bobby Scott, Representative Ginny Brown-Waite, and Representative Peter King. All of them worked hard along with the delegation that is present, and so we are very grateful to all of them.

I want to join all of today's speakers in thanking those of you who worked so hard to make this occasion possible. But above all, I want to pay tribute to the veterans who are now advancing their dreams by pursuing an education.

Obviously, I'm honored to be here and to renew our commitment to ensure that the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States of America get the opportunities that they have earned. I was a proud cosponsor of the post-9/11 GI bill as Senator. I'm committed to working with Secretary Shinseki to see that it is successfully implemented as President. And we do this not just to meet our moral obligation to those who've sacrificed greatly on our behalf and on behalf of the country, we do it because these men and women must now be prepared to lead our Nation in the peaceful pursuit of economic leadership in the 21st century.

This generation of service men and women has already earned a place of honor in American history. Each of them signed up to serve, many after they knew that they would be sent into harm's way. Over the last 8 years, they have endured tour after tour of duty in dangerous and distant places. They've experienced grueling combat, from the streets of Fallujah to the harsh terrain of Helmand Province. They've adapted to complex insurgencies, protected local populations, and trained foreign security forces. So by any measure, they are the authors of one of the most extraordinary chapters of military service in the history of our Nation. And I don't make that statement lightly. For we know that anyone who puts on the uniform joins an unbroken line of selfless patriots that stretches back to Lexington and Concord. The freedom and prosperity that we enjoy would not exist without the service of generations of Americans who were willing to bear the heaviest and most dangerous burden.

But we also know this: The contributions that our service men and women can make to this Nation do not end when they take off that uniform. We owe a debt to all who serve. And when we repay that debt to those bravest Americans among us, then we are investing in our future, not just their future, but also the future of our own country.

Now, this was the lesson that America was sometimes too slow to learn. After the Civil War and World War I, we saw far too many veterans who were denied the chance to live their dreams, men who were unable to find in peace the hope that they had fought for in war.

And FDR knew this. In 1943, before the beaches of Normandy were stormed and the treacherous terrain of Iwo Jima was taken, he told the Nation that the veterans of World War

II would be treated differently. He said that they must not be demobilized, and I quote, "to a place on a breadline," demobilized, "to a place on a breadline or on a corner selling apples." Instead, Roosevelt said, "The American people will insist on fulfilling this American obligation to the men and women in the Armed Forces who are winning this war for us."

That is precisely what the American people did. The GI bill was approved just weeks after D–Day, and carried with it a simple promise to all who had served: You pick the school; we'll help pick up the bill. And what followed was not simply an opportunity for our veterans; it was a transformation for our country. By 1947, half of all Americans enrolled in college were veterans. Now, ultimately, this would lead to 3 Presidents, 3 Supreme Court Justices, 14 Nobel Prize winners, and two dozen Pulitzer Prize winners. But more importantly, it produced hundreds of thousands of scientists and engineers, doctors and nurses—the backbone of the largest middle class in history. All told, nearly 8 million Americans were educated under the original GI bill, including my grandfather.

No number can sum up this sea change in our society. Reginald Wilson, a fighter pilot from Detroit, said, "I didn't know anyone who went to college. I never would have gone to college had it not been for the GI bill." H.G. Jones, a Navy man from North Carolina, said, "What happened in my rural Caswell County community happened all over the country… going to college was no longer a novelty." Indeed, one of the men who went to college on the GI bill, as I mentioned, was my grandfather, and I would not be standing here today if that opportunity had not led him West in search of opportunity.

So we owe the same obligations to this generation of service men and women, as was afforded that previous generation. That is the promise of the post-1911 [9/11]* GI bill. It's driven by the same simple logic that drove the first GI bill: You pick the school; we'll help pick up the bill. And looking out at the audience today, I'm proud to see so many veterans who will be able to pursue their education with this new support from the American people.

And this is even more important than it was in 1944. The first GI bill helped build a postwar economy that has been transformed by revolutions in communications and technology. And that's why the post-1911—9/11 GI bill must give today's veterans the skills and training they need to fill the jobs of tomorrow. Education is the currency that can purchase success in the 21st century, and this is the opportunity that our troops have earned.

I'm also proud that all who have borne the burden of service these last several years will have access to this opportunity. We are including reservists and National Guard members, because they have carried out unprecedented deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq. We are including the military families who have sacrificed so much, by allowing the transfer of unused benefits to family members. And we are including those who pay the ultimate price, by making this benefit available to the children of those who lost their life in service of their country.

This is not simply a debt that we are repaying to the remarkable men and women who have served; it is an investment in our own country. The first GI bill paid for itself many times over through the increased revenue that came from a generation of men and women who received the skills and education that they needed to create their own wealth. The veterans who are here today—like the young post-9/11 veterans around the country—can lead the way to a lasting economic recovery and become the glue that holds our communities together. They too can become the backbone of a growing American middle class.

And even as we help our veterans learn the skills they need to succeed, I know that all of us can learn something from the men and women who serve our country. We have lived through an age when many people and institutions acted irresponsibly, when service often took a backseat to short-term profits, when

* White House correction.

hard choices were put aside for somebody else, for some other time. It's a time when easy distractions became the norm and the trivial has been taken too seriously.

The men and women who have served since 9/11 tell us a different story. While so many were reaching for the quick buck, they were heading out on patrol. While our discourse often produced more heat than light, especially here in Washington, they have put their very lives on the line for America. They have borne the responsibility of war. And now, with this policy, we are making it clear that the United States of America must reward responsibility and not irresponsibility. Now, with this policy, we are letting those who have borne the heaviest burden lead us into the 21st century.

And so today we honor the service of an extraordinary generation and look to America that they will help build tomorrow. With the post-9/11 GI bill, we can give our veterans the chance to live their dreams, and we can help unleash their talents and tap their creativity and be guided by their sense of responsibility to their fellow citizens and to this country that we all love so much.

And may God bless our troops and our veterans, and may God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:20 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to S. Sgt. James L. Miller, USMC, who introduced the President; Alan G. Merten, president, George Mason University; and former Sen. John W. Warner and Sen. Mark R. Warner.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Amir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah of Kuwait

August 3, 2009

President Obama. I want to extend my welcome to the Amir of Kuwait. We are grateful for his visit. When I was traveling in the region, the Amir showed me great hospitality, so I'm glad to be able to return the gesture. Although, I have to confess that I think the meal that we're preparing is much smaller than the one he prepared for me.

Kuwait and the United States enjoy very strong bilateral relations. We are looking to make those relations even stronger. Kuwait has been an outstanding host for the United States Armed Forces during its operations in Iraq. And as we transition our operations in Iraq, it's important for us to emphasize not only our gratitude to Kuwait, but also our ongoing commitment to Kuwait's security.

We're also discussing important regional issues ranging from the importance of moving the Arab-Israeli peace process forward, to the situation in Afghanistan, our joint counterterrorism efforts, and our need to emphasize Iran meeting its international obligations. And I'm confident that, based on this conversation and ongoing work between our two countries, that we can strengthen not only Kuwaiti-U.S. relationships, but also create a more stable region of peace and security in the region.

Amir Sabah. Thank you very much, Mr. President, Your Excellency, for this kind welcome. And I would like to affirm to the American people that Kuwait shall remain a partner of the United States; Kuwait shall remain an ally and a partner of the United States.

At the same token, I'm very delighted to be here with my colleagues during this visit. I also am very delighted to congratulate President Obama on his birthday tomorrow. And I also would like to congratulate him on the finding of the remains of the pilot, the U.S. pilot Speicher, that was lost back during the first war of Iraq.

I also would like to congratulate President Obama on his Presidency. We have also discussed various issues of Afghanistan, the issue of Iran, and the issue of the Israeli-Arab relations. I affirmed to President Obama that we are interested in bringing about peace to the Middle East. It is in our interest that peace be brought about. And the indicator is that there is an Arab peace initiative that was agreed upon

by all other Arab parties and states, and we implement this peace initiative when Israel implements and fulfills its obligations.

President Obama. Okay. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Amir Sabah referred to Capt. Michael S. "Scott" Speicher, USN, who was lost in action on January 17, 1991, and whose remains were recovered in Iraq's Anbar Province in July. Amir Sabah spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks on the Release of American Journalists by North Korea
August 5, 2009

Good morning, everybody. I want to just make a brief comment about the fact that the two young journalists, Euna Lee and Laura Ling, are safely back with their families. We are, obviously, extraordinarily relieved. I had an opportunity to speak with the families yesterday once we knew that they were on the plane. The reunion that we've all seen on television, I think, is a source of happiness not only for the families but for the entire country.

I want to thank President Bill Clinton—I had a chance to talk to him—for the extraordinary humanitarian effort that resulted in the release of the two journalists. I want to thank Vice President Al Gore, who worked tirelessly in order to achieve a positive outcome.

I think that not only is this White House, obviously, extraordinarily happy, but all Americans should be grateful to both former President Clinton and Vice President Gore for their extraordinary work. And my hope is, is that the families that have been reunited can enjoy the next several days and weeks, understanding that because of the efforts of President Clinton and Gore, they are able to be with each other once again.

So we are very pleased with the outcome, and I'm hopeful that the families are going to be able to get some good time together in the next few days.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:37 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to American journalists Euna Lee and Laura Ling, who had been held by North Korean authorities since March 17.

Remarks at Monaco RV, LLC, in Wakarusa, Indiana
August 5, 2009

The President. Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat. Thank you so much. Well, it is wonderful to be in Wakarusa. Thank you so much for the wonderful welcome. Herman, thanks for the great introduction. It is great to be back in Indiana. This is as close as I've gotten to home in a while. [*Laughter*]

And I flew out here with somebody who I think the people of Indiana have known for a long time, have trusted for a long time because he's fighting for working families in Indiana each and every day, and that is our great Senator, Evan Bayh. Please give Evan a big round of applause.

And it's nice to get out of Washington and spend some time with people who actually sent me to Washington. Too often, there are those in Washington who focus on the ups and downs of politics. But my concern is the ups and downs in the lives of the American people: the families feeling the pain of this recession; the folks I've met across this country who've lost jobs and savings and health insurance but haven't lost hope; the men and women who still believe in the capacity, the ability of this Nation to meet the challenges of our times.

Now, these are challenges you know all too well here in Wakarusa and in Elkhart County.

This area has been hit with a perfect storm of economic troubles. Over the last few decades, you've borne the brunt of a steadily weakening of American manufacturing in the face of global competition. You've felt the impact of the struggles of the American auto industry and the repercussions that have hit the Midwest especially hard. And you're living every day with the consequences of this recession and the financial meltdown, and you've felt it in the form of lost jobs and lost savings.

So as a result, the Elkhart area has experienced the second greatest increase in the rate of unemployment in the country, up 10 points in a year. It's an astonishing statistic. And there have been times where nearly one in five people in this area have been looking for work. You've seen factories close and your sons and daughters move away in searches of jobs and opportunity. So this is more than an economic crisis. This goes to the heart and soul of a community. It tests the strength of families and the spirit of good people, hard-working folks who've given their all to a company and now don't know where to turn.

There are some who see what's taking place here and suggest that it's all somehow inevitable, and that the only way for America to get ahead is for places like Elkhart to be left behind. You hear that argument sometime in Washington. But I know and you know that the truth is exactly the opposite. I'm here because I believe our ability to recover, and to prosper as a nation, depends on what happens in communities just like this one.

The battle for America's future will be fought and won in places like Elkhart and Detroit and Goshen and Pittsburgh, South Bend, Youngstown, in cities and towns across Indiana and across the Midwest and across the country that have been the backbone of America. It will be won by making places like Elkhart what they once were and can be again, and that's centers of innovation and entrepreneurship and ingenuity and opportunity, the bustling, whirring, humming engines of American prosperity.

For as the world grows more competitive, we can't afford to run the race at half strength or half speed. If we hope to lead this century like we did the last century, we have to create the conditions and the opportunities for places like Elkhart to succeed. We have to harness the potential, the innovative and creative spirit that's waiting to be awakened all across America. That's how we'll rebuild this economy stronger than before: strong enough to compete in the global economy; strong enough to avoid the cycles of boom and bust that have wreaked on—so much havoc on our economy; strong enough to support the jobs of the 21st century; and strong enough to unleash prosperity for everybody, not just some.

But before we can rebuild our economy for tomorrow, we have to rescue it today. Now, that's why we passed a Recovery Act less than 1 month after I took office, and we did so without any of the earmarks or porkbarrel spending that's so common in Washington, DC. And let me just talk about the so-called stimulus package, or the Recovery Act, because there's been a lot of misinformation out there about the Recovery Act. Let me tell you what it is and what it's not.

The plan was divided into three parts. One-third of the money has gone to tax relief for families and small businesses. One-third of the money is cutting people's taxes. For Americans struggling to pay rising bills with shrinking wages, we kept a campaign promise to put a middle class tax cut in the pockets of 95 percent of working families, a tax cut that began showing up in paychecks of 4.8 million Indiana households about 3 months ago. We also cut taxes for small businesses on the investments that they make. And more than 425 small businesses in Indiana have received SBA loans through the recovery package. So that's—one-third of the money was tax cuts.

Another third of the money in the Recovery Act has been for emergency relief that is helping folks who've borne the brunt of this recession. For Americans who were laid off, we expanded unemployment benefits, and that's already made a difference for 12 million Americans, including 220,000 folks right here in Indiana. We're making health insurance 65 percent cheaper for families relying on COBRA while looking for work. Some of you know people who lost their jobs, were worried about losing their health care, couldn't afford COBRA.

We were able to reduce their costs by 65 percent so they could keep their health care while they were looking for jobs.

And for States facing historic budget shortfalls, we provided assistance that has saved the jobs of tens of thousands of teachers and public—and police officers and other public servants so that you wouldn't see the recession get even worse. So that's the second half. First half, tax relief; second half, support for individuals, small businesses, and States that had fallen on hard times.

The last third of the Recovery Act—and that's what we're going to talk about here today—is for investments that are not only putting people back to work in the short term but laying a new foundation for growth and prosperity in the long run. These are the jobs of building the future of America, upgrading our roads and our bridges, renovating schools and hospitals. The Elkhart area has seen the benefits: Dozens were employed to resurface the runway at Elkhart Airport; a 4-mile stretch of highway is being upgraded on US–33; the Heart City Health Center has received recovery dollars to expand services and hire additional staff.

And as part of the recovery plan, we're making a historic commitment to innovation. The Recovery Act creates jobs doubling our capacity to generate renewable energy, building a new smart grid that carry electricity from coast to coast, laying down broadband lines and high-speed rail lines, and providing the largest boost in basic research in history to ensure that America leads in the breakthrough discoveries of the new century, just as we led in the last. Because that's what we do best in America, we turn ideas into inventions and inventions into industries.

Now, history should be our guide. The United States led the world's economies in the 20th century because we led the world in innovation. Today, the competition is keener, the challenge is tougher, and that's why innovation is more important than ever. That's the key to good, new jobs in the 21st century. That's how we will ensure a high quality of life for this generation and future generations. With these investments, we're planting the seeds of progress for our country and good-paying, private sector jobs for the American people.

So that's why I'm here today, to announce $2.4 billion in highly competitive grants to develop the next generation of fuel-efficient cars and trucks powered by the next generation of battery technologies all made right here in the U.S. of A. Right here in America, made in America.

For too long, we failed to invest in this kind of innovative work, even as countries like China and Japan were racing ahead. And that's why this announcement is so important. This represents the largest investment in this kind of technology in American history.

See, I'm committed to a strategy that ensures America leads in the design and the deployment of the next generation of clean energy vehicles. This is not just an investment to produce vehicles today; this is an investment in our capacity to develop new technologies tomorrow. This is about creating the infrastructure of innovation.

Indiana is the second largest recipient of grant funding, and it's a perfect example of what this will mean. You've got Purdue University, Notre Dame, Indiana University, and Ivy Tech, and they're all going to be receiving grant funding to develop degree and training programs for electric vehicles. That's number one. We've got EnerDel, a small business in Indianapolis that will develop batteries for hybrid and electric vehicles. You've got Allison Transmission in Indianapolis, Delphi in Kokomo, Remy in Pendleton, and Magna located in Muncie, all who will help develop electric-drive components for commercial and passenger vehicles.

And right here in Elkhart County, Navistar—which has taken over two Monaco Coach manufacturing facilities—will receive a $39 million grant to build 400 advanced battery electric trucks with a range of a hundred miles, like the trucks here today—right there. Just a few months ago, folks thought that these factories might be closed for good. But now they're coming back to life.

Audience member. Thank you!

The President. You're welcome. [*Laughter*] Thank the American people.

The company estimates that this investment will help create or save hundreds of jobs in the area. And already, folks like Herman are being rehired. So, overall, the companies believe these investments in battery technology will save or create thousands of Hoosier jobs. And I want to point out, these thousands of jobs wouldn't be possible if it weren't for the leaders in Congress who supported the Recovery Act, leaders like Evan Bayh and Joe Donnelly, who's here today, and Andre Carson and Brad Ellsworth and Peter Visclosky.

And these grants will create tens of thousands of jobs all across America. In fact, today Vice President Biden is announcing grant winners in Michigan. Members of my Cabinet are fanning out across the country announcing recipients elsewhere. We're providing the incentives to those businesses, large and small, that stand ready to help us lead a new clean energy economy by developing new technologies for new kinds of vehicles.

See, I don't want to just reduce our dependence on foreign oil and then end up being dependent on their foreign innovations. I don't want to have to import a hybrid car; I want to be able to build a hybrid car here. I don't want to have to import a hybrid truck; I want to build a hybrid truck here. I don't want to have to import a windmill from someplace else; I want to build a windmill right here in Indiana. I want the cars of the future and the technologies that power them to be developed and deployed right here, in America.

And that's just the beginning. In no area will innovation be more important than in the development of new ways to produce, use, and save energy. So we're not only doubling our capacity to generate renewable energy and building a stronger and smarter electric grid, we've helped reach an agreement to raise fuel economy standards. And for the first time in history, we passed a bill to create a system of clean energy incentives, which will help make renewable energy the profitable kind of energy in America, while helping to end our dependence on foreign oil and protect our planet for future generations.

The bill passed the House; we're now working to pass legislation through the Senate. Because we know that real innovation depends not on government, but on the generative potential of the American people. If the American people get a clear set of rules, if they know what's needed, what challenges we've got to meet, they'll figure out how to do it.

In fact, that's why our budget makes the research and experimentation tax credit permanent, the R&D tax credit. This is a tax credit that helps companies afford what are sometimes very high costs in developing new ideas and new technologies and new products, and that means new jobs. This tax credit returns $2 to the economy for every $1 we spend. And for a long time we were just trying to renew it once every year, and companies didn't know whether or not they were going to be able to get it for the next year. That's changed. We've now made it permanent.

I've also proposed reducing to zero the capital gains tax for investments in small or startup businesses, because small businesses are innovative businesses; small businesses produce 13 times more patents per employee than large companies.

Of course, in order to lead in the global economy and ensure that our businesses can grow and innovate, we also have to pass health insurance reform that brings down costs and provides more security for folks who have insurance and affordable options for those who don't. I promise you: We will pass reform by the end of this year because the American people need it. The American people need some relief. Now, it's going—we're going to have to make it happen.

In fact, the recovery plan began the process of reform by modernizing our health care infrastructure. We took some long-overdue steps of computerizing America's health records, which can reduce all the waste and errors that cost billions of dollars and thousands of lives, while protecting patients' privacy. It's important also to know that these records hold the potential of offering patients the chance to be more active participants in the prevention and treatment of illnesses. You won't have to fill out the same form a dozen times. You won't have to rely on

your memory when talking to your doctor about your medical history. All those things make people healthier, but they also reduce your costs, lower your premiums, give you more security in your health care.

Now, in addition to energy and in addition to health care, we also know that the nation that outeducates us today will outcompete us tomorrow. So we're making a historic commitment to strengthening and improving education, from cradle through career. Right now our schools continue to trail many of our competitors. And that's why I've challenged States to dramatically improve achievement by raising standards and modernizing science labs, upgrading curriculum, forming new partnerships to promote math and science, and improving the use of technology in the classroom.

And I've set this goal: In the next decade, by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. We used to be number one. We will be number one again when it comes to college graduates.

Now, to reach this goal, we've provided tax credits and grants to make college education more affordable, and we've made a historic commitment to community colleges, which are the unsung heroes in America's education system. America can and must have the best educated, highest skilled workforce in the world, because if we're building new cars here in America, if we're building a new clean energy grid in America, then we're also going to need to build engineers in America and scientists in America and skilled technicians right here in America, so all these pieces end up fitting together.

Energy and innovation, health care and education, these are the pillars of the new foundation that we have to build. This is how we won't just rescue the economy, but we're going to rebuild it stronger than before.

Now, there are a lot of people out there who are looking to defend the status quo. There are those who want to seek political advantage. They want to oppose these efforts. Some of them caused the problems that we got now in the first place, and then suddenly, they're blaming other folks for it. They don't want to be constructive. They don't want to be constructive; they just want to get in the usual political fights back and forth. And sometimes that's fed by all the cable chatter on the media.

But you and I know the truth. We know that even in the hardest times, against the toughest odds, we have never surrendered. We don't give up. We don't surrender our fates to chance. We have always endured. We have worked hard, and we have fought for our future. Our parents had to fight for their future; our grandparents had to fight for their future. That's the tradition of America. This country wasn't built just by griping and complaining; it was built by hard work and taking risks. And that's what we have to do today.

So I know these are tough times. If you haven't lost a job, you know somebody who has, maybe a family member, a neighbor, a friend. You know that as difficult as the financial struggle can be, the sense of loss when you lose your job is about more than just a paycheck. We as Americans, we define ourselves by the work we do. It's a source of pride, a sense that you're contributing, that you're supporting your family, that you're doing the right thing, that you're responsible. And the truth is, it can be easy to lose hope, especially when you see a lot of folks out there who failed to meet their responsibilities, from Wall Street to Washington. It can be easy to grow cynical when you see politicians say one thing and then do another, or say one thing and then do nothing; when you've seen decades of broken promises and broken politics.

But this is a rare moment in which we're called upon to rise above the failures of the past. This is a chance to restore that spirit of optimism and opportunity which has always been central to our success. We've got to set our sights higher, not lower. We've got to imagine a future in which new American cars are powered by new American innovation; a future in which cities that led the global economy before are leading it again; a brighter future for Elkhart, a brighter future for Indiana, and for the United States of America.

That's what we're fighting for. That's what this plant's about. That's what you're about.

That's what we're going to achieve in the weeks and months to come. So thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Herman Wiley, employee, Monaco RV, LLC, who introduced the President.

Videotaped Remarks to the African Growth and Opportunity Act Forum
August 5, 2009

Hello, everyone. I'm sorry I couldn't be there with you in person. But please know that for me and for my family, the memories from our recent trip to Ghana are still fresh. We will always remember the warmth of the Ghanaian people and the promise of Africa's potential.

I hope you're enjoying Kenya and the hospitality of the Kenyan people as much as I always have. When I first came in 1987, it was to discover the story of my father, who had grown up herding goats in the tiny village of Alego. When I visited as a Senator, I promised to work for a U.S. foreign policy that gives hope and opportunity to the people of this great continent.

Today it is my privilege to address you as President. And I want to repeat what I said 3 weeks ago in Accra: I do not see the countries and the peoples of Africa as a world apart, I see Africa as a fundamental part of our interconnected world. In our global economy, our economic fortunes are shared. And history shows that economic growth is among the greatest forces for progress in lifting people out of poverty.

That's why the African Growth and Opportunity Act is so important. That's why the AGOA Forum is so critical. By breaking down old barriers and opening new markets, we not only increase trade between our countries, we create powerful incentives for African entrepreneurs to grow their businesses, to create jobs, and build a brighter tomorrow for their children. That is what AGOA is all about.

So I thank President Kibaki and Prime Minister Odinga for hosting this forum. And I pledge to you the full support and partnership of the United States. That is why my administration is represented there today by outstanding members of my Cabinet.

Over the last decade, AGOA has transformed the U.S.-African trade relationship. Opening America's doors to your exports has been good for Africa: creating African jobs, bringing millions of dollars of investment to sub-Saharan Africa, and sparking new trade across the continent. And it's been good for America, with African exporters seeking U.S. expertise, investments, and joint ventures. And today, we're your single largest trade partner.

At the same time, it's clear that U.S.-African trade has yet to realize its full potential. And if the current recession teaches us anything, it's that in a global economy not only the opportunities are shared, so are the risks. So there's so much more we can do together to plant the seeds of our economic recovery and to achieve lasting prosperity.

Only Africans can unlock Africa's potential. It will take your entrepreneurship, your innovation. And only Africans can ensure the good governance and strong institutions upon which development depends. Open markets alone are not enough. Development requires the rule of law, transparency, accountability, and an atmosphere that welcomes investment. And I encourage every country to set concrete goals for overcoming the obstacles to economic growth.

And to all Africans who are pursuing a future of hope and opportunity, know this: You have a partner and a friend in the United States. That's why we'll work with you to develop strong institutions, clear legal frameworks, and the regulations and infrastructure that help bring new products to market. That's why we'll work together to harness Africa's vast natural resources to generate clean, renewable energy for export. That's why I've pledged substantial increases in our foreign assistance, not simply to help people scrape by, but to unleash transformational change. And that's why we've joined with our international partners to promote food security by investing $20 billion in agricultural development, not simply to hand out American food, but to promote African self-sufficiency.

These are the things we can do together to unleash the skills and talents of our people and to ensure our common prosperity in the 21st century. And if we do, I'm confident that Africans can live their dreams from Nairobi to Accra, from Lagos to Kigali, from Kinshasa to Cape Town.

Thank you for your work at this important forum. Enjoy Nairobi.

NOTE: The President's remarks were videotaped at approximately 2:35 p.m. on July 31 in the Red Room at the White House for later transmission to the forum meeting in Nairobi, Kenya. In his remarks, he referred to President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Amolo Odinga of Kenya. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on the Nomination of John V. Roos To Be Ambassador to Japan
August 6, 2009

The President. Hello, everybody. I think many of you are aware that the partnership between the United States and Japan is one of tremendous importance. It's one of the cornerstones of our both security and economic well being. We have an extraordinarily close relationship that's based on shared values and shared interests. There is enormous respect between the people of Japan and the people of the United States.

And it's for that reason that my administration wants to get off on a strong footing diplomatically in our relationship. And I placed great importance in the selection of who would represent the United States as Ambassador to Japan. After careful consideration, I made the determination that the person who I thought could best do this is somebody with superb judgment, somebody with an outstanding intellect, somebody who is a very close friend of mine and a close adviser, somebody who has worked both in the private sector with cutting-edge technologies, but also is somebody who has a deep interest in public service. And that's my friend John Roos.

He is somebody who I'm confident is going to be able to help to strengthen both the regional and global relationship between the United States and Japan. He's somebody who will be able to advise me directly on issues that may arise and opportunities that may arise in the U.S.-Japanese relationship. He is somebody who, I know, is going to be working incredibly hard to make sure that he is listening to and understanding the full scope of Japanese concerns. And so I very much appreciate his willingness to take on this task.

And he and his wife, Susie, and his family are prepared to and eager to travel to Japan. It's a sacrifice to, obviously, uproot yourself, but John has shown nothing but great enthusiasm for what is one of the most important diplomatic tasks that we have in the country. And I'm grateful for his service and confident that he is going to represent not only my administration but the United States of America with extraordinary ability.

So thank you so much, John.

Ambassador-Designate Roos. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. I appreciate it. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:55 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks on Senate Confirmation of Sonia M. Sotomayor as a Supreme Court Associate Justice and an Exchange With Reporters
August 6, 2009

The President. Well, I am pleased and deeply gratified that the Senate has voted to confirm Judge Sonia Sotomayor as our Nation's 111th Supreme Court Justice. I want to thank the Senate Judiciary Committee, particularly its chairman, Senator Leahy, as well as its ranking member, Senator Sessions, for giving Judge Sotomayor a thorough and civil hearing.

And I thank them for doing so in a timely manner so that she can be fully prepared to take her seat when the Court's work begins this September.

The members of our Supreme Court are granted life tenure and are charged with the vital and difficult task of applying principles set forth at our founding to the questions and controversies of our time. Over the past 10 weeks, members of the Senate Judiciary Committee and the full Senate have assessed Judge Sotomayor's fitness for this work. They've scrutinized her record as a prosecutor, as a litigator, and as a judge. They've gauged her respect for the proper role of each branch of our Government, her commitment to faithfully apply the law to the facts at hand, and her determination to protect our core constitutional rights and freedoms.

And with this historic vote, the Senate has affirmed that Judge Sotomayor has the intellect, the temperament, the history, the integrity, and the independence of mind to ably serve on our Nation's highest court.

This is a role that the Senate has played for more than two centuries, helping to ensure that "equal justice under the law" is not merely a phrase inscribed above our courthouse door, but a description of what happens every single day inside the courtroom. It's a promise that, whether you're a mighty corporation or an ordinary American, you will receive a full and fair hearing, and in the end, the outcome of your case will be determined by nothing more or less than the strength of your argument and the dictates of the law.

These core American ideals—justice, equality, and opportunity—are the very ideals that have made Judge Sotomayor's own uniquely American journey possible. They're ideals she's fought for throughout her career and the ideals the Senate has upheld today in breaking yet another barrier and moving us yet another step closer to a more perfect union.

Like so many other aspects of this Nation, I'm filled with pride in this achievement and great confidence that Judge Sotomayor will make an outstanding Supreme Court Justice. This is a wonderful day for Judge Sotomayor and her family, but I also think it's a wonderful day for America.

Thank you very much, everybody.

Breakdown of Senate Vote on Confirmation

Q. Are you happy with the 68 votes, sir?
The President. I'm very happy.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:38 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Statement on Senate Passage of Legislation to Fund the CAR Allowance Rebate System
August 6, 2009

I want to thank the United States Senate for acting in a bipartisan way to use Recovery Act funds to extend the Cash for Clunkers program. Now more American consumers will have the chance to purchase newer, more fuel efficient cars and the American economy will continue to get a much-needed boost. Cash for Clunkers has been a proven success. The initial transactions are generating a more than 50-precent increase in fuel economy, they are generating $700 to $1000 in annual savings for consumers in reduced gas costs alone, and they are getting the oldest, dirtiest, and most air polluting trucks and SUVs off the road for good. Businesses across the country, from small auto dealerships and suppliers to large auto manufacturers, are putting people back to work as a result of this program. I want to thank Leader Reid and the Members of the Senate who moved quickly to extend a program that benefits our recovery and our auto industry while reducing our economy's dependence on oil.

Remarks at a Fundraiser for Gubernatorial Candidate R. Creigh Deeds in McLean, Virginia

August 6, 2009

Hello, Virginia. It is good to be in Virginia. It's not that far away, but—[*laughter*]—it's still just good to be here. I still get a good vibe from Virginia. And I just want to begin by telling you, one of the reasons I love Virginia is because early in my campaign, January of 2007—[*laughter*]—I'm trying to remember it; it's all a blur—[*laughter*]—right after I announced, I called up the new Governor of Virginia, and obviously, he was new, not very experienced—[*laughter*]—because he decided he was going to endorse my candidacy at a time when nobody could pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] And he has been at my side ever since, and he's been on the side of the people of Virginia every since. Give it up for Tim Kaine.

Now, there's a pattern that's emerged in Virginia. You had a guy named Mark Warner who recognized that the old tired politics of division and slash-and-burn weren't serving the American people and the people of Virginia anymore. So he came in with a different message. He said, "I'm going to figure out what works. I'm going to figure out how we can get parties to work together, to invest in education and make sure that every child in Virginia can get a great education. I'm going to figure out how we can start making the long-term investments that will make Virginia competitive in a global economy." And working together with a whole bunch of folks, he was able to put Virginia on the path of extraordinary growth.

Then, Tim Kaine comes in and builds on that legacy, and even in tough times has continued to keep Virginia on an upward trajectory where it has been able to survive tough times better than most because of the long-term investments, the vision that Tim Kaine has maintained as Governor of Virginia. He hasn't been distracted by the petty politics and the trivial politics and the game-playing. He constantly asks himself each and every day, what do I need to do to make life a little bit better for the people of Virginia?

So now this great Commonwealth of Virginia has the opportunity to continue that tradition with somebody who has that same spirit of pragmatism, of cooperation, of listening to people even when other people don't agree with him, of civility, an ability to focus not on the short-term politics of an issue but the long term that will make a difference, and that is Creigh Deeds. And I know that the people of Virginia are going to continue that tradition.

Now, I'll admit I'm a little biased—[*laughter*]—because I was a State senator for 8 years, and lo and behold, Creigh Deeds has been a Senator for 8 years. He has some wonderful daughters; I've got wonderful daughters. He's got kind of a funny name—[*laughter*]—I've got kind of a funny name. [*Laughter*] So there's some things that just create a bond between the two of us. [*Laughter*]

But the reason I'm standing here is because when I look at his record as a prosecutor, when I look at the way that he was able to marshal support for things like Megan's Law and AMBER Alerts that have practical consequences in making sure that our children are safe, when I think about the way he was able to partner with Mark Warner and Tim Kaine in order to create strong investments in education even when they were confronting a fiscal crisis, doing it in a responsible way that didn't undermine the long-term growth of Virginia, when I look at the way he conducts himself in his campaign, speaking truth to power, but always doing it in a way that reminds us that we have to bring people together instead of driving them apart, I know he is the right person for Virginia. And you know it too; that's why you're supporting him.

But look, let's be honest. This is going to be a tough race. This is not going to be easy. Now, Tim and I, as we were walking in, we said, we don't like doing easy—we never—we don't do things easy. [*Laughter*] We like kind of squeaking it out to create more excitement, enthusiasm, and give reporters something

better to write about. [*Laughter*] We don't believe in blowout victories. [*Laughter*]

But this is going to be a tough race. It's going to be a tough race because Virginia, although it has been moving in the right direction, is still a purple State. It still has traditions that make a lot of people independent, a lot of people suspicious of ideologies on other side—either side. That's part of what's going to make this tough. And it's also going to be tough because the economic environment is tough. I don't think any of us can deny it. Virginia has weathered this economic storm better than most States, but unemployment is still high, people are still losing their homes, folks are still looking at their 401(k) and wondering whether it's going to bounce back.

And so in that kind of environment, wherever the incumbent party is, it's always going to have some challenges. Even if people, when they really stop to think about it, recognize that this is mostly a mess that was inherited, people are still going to, rightly, hold the party in power responsible. What's your plan? What's your agenda? How are you going to move this State forward? And that's right and proper, because we can't spend all our time looking backwards or making excuses. Our job is to look forward and to determine how are we going to—regardless of what cards we're dealt—how are we going to make sure that families here in Virginia and all across America are able to succeed.

Now, I think that we have the best case to make that having brought this economy back from the brink, having inherited an unprecedented crisis, still we are now on the path where markets have stabilized, the banks are no longer in meltdown mode; we're starting to see housing for the first time increase in prices in 3 years; that we're starting to see a kind of resurgence of optimism that in this environment, if we are willing to make the investments in the new foundation for long-term growth, then we're going to succeed.

And the kinds of things that we need for that new foundation are exactly the kinds of things that Creigh is talking about: making sure that we continue to invest in early childhood education and everything that's necessary for our children to succeed in math and science; making sure that they can finance their college educations, because we know that whoever trains their children best today, that's going to be the country that's able to compete tomorrow; making sure that we are tapping into a new clean energy economy that is focused on harnessing the innovation and the dynamism of the American people, and making sure that we're creating a business environment in which small businesses and large businesses are rewarded for success; making sure that we've got a transportation infrastructure that works for people to get to and fro from work, but also allows businesses to succeed.

Those are the kinds of measures and steps that Creigh has stood for since he first entered into politics. That's what's going to help guide this economy into the future, into the 21st century. So the key right now for all of us is making sure that we fight through the doubts, we fight through the cynicism, we hit the ground. I want to make sure that everybody who was as activated around my campaign just a few months ago is not sitting back and suddenly saying their work is done. I need everybody who was in Virginia and helped give us a big win during the primary and helped give us a historic win in the general election—that everybody is working just as hard, knocking on doors, making phone calls, talking to their friends, talking to their neighbors.

We have just started to change this country, and we need a partner like Creigh Deeds to finish the work that we just began.

Thank you very much, Virginia. Love you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:25 p.m. at the Hilton McLean Tysons Corner. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Mark R. Warner; and Amanda, Rebecca, and Susannah Deeds, daughters of Virginia State Sen. R. Creigh Deeds. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 7.

Remarks at a Rally for Gubernatorial Candidate R. Creigh Deeds in McLean
August 6, 2009

The President. Hello, Virginia. Are you fired up? Are you ready to go? It is good to be in Virginia, a place that has been good to me. First of all, it's just good to be next to a guy who spends every single day thinking about your future, thinking about your children's future, and the future of this Commonwealth, one of my best friends, somebody who is dedicated to the kind of public service that I so deeply believe in, please give it up for your Governor, Tim Kaine.

I think some of you know that Tim was the first statewide official outside of Illinois to endorse me, in Richmond, Virginia. I called him up just a few weeks after I'd announced, and he was kind of new so he didn't know any better. [*Laughter*] So he said, "Yeah, sure, I'll endorse you." [*Laughter*] I think his wife Anne had something to do with it also. And he has stood with me ever since, on every tough battle that we've had. And so I am just grateful for him. He was there when people couldn't even pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] So we're grateful.

Now, part of the reason that I like being in Virginia is because there is a tradition here that has been developing, starting with your former Governor and now outstanding Senator, Mark Warner. A tradition that—it starts off with the basic idea that we're all in this together. Mark Warner came in at a time when the fashionable politics was the nasty kind of politics, the slash-and-burn politics, the arguing and arguing without everything—ever getting anything done kind of politics. And Mark Warner said, "You know what, we can try something different. What we're going to do is we're going to be pragmatic instead of ideological. We are going to try to bring people together rather than push them apart. We are going to make sure that we listen to other people's ideas. We're going to bring labor and business together. We're going to make sure that we don't have a southern Virginia and a northern Virginia. We've got one Commonwealth of Virginia."

And so what he was able to do was to shape a kind of politics here in the Commonwealth that has resulted in one of the best-managed States in the country, a State that was able to make investments in education even as it was dealing with a fiscal crisis, a State that has now been able to navigate some of the toughest economic times that we've seen in the history of the country, because of that foundation of civility and practicality and hard work.

Tim Kaine embodied that tradition, and he has now continued it during his term in office. That's not just a stroke of good luck here in the State of Virginia. It's because you stood up and chose that kind of politics. You decided to take the better way, and now you've got the chance to keep moving forward by electing somebody who is cut from the same cloth, somebody who has that same vision for the Commonwealth, Creigh Deeds.

Now, I admit I'm a little biased here. I'm a little biased. First of all, Creigh Deeds and I both have some wonderful daughters. Creigh Deeds and I both served in the State senate. I served for 8 years, and he's now served for 8 years. Creigh Deeds and I both have—let's face it—sort of funny names. [*Laughter*] Still trying to figure out the spelling of "Creigh"—[*laughter*]—but that's not the reason I'm here tonight. It's not just because of my personal bias.

This is a man who's spent his life working to do right by his family, and the last two decades working to do right by the people of Virginia. As a prosecutor, as a delegate, as a State senator, he has worked tirelessly to advance this Commonwealth that he's loved his whole life.

He wrote Megan's Law, advocated for the AMBER Alert program to protect our children. He worked to preserve open space and protect the environment. When Virginia faced that financial crisis a few years back, he was on Mark Warner's team to make sure that you reformed the budget and controlled spending, and even in the face of that crisis, record investments in education, laying a foundation for Virginia's growth.

Creigh will continue the progress that has been made in this great Commonwealth. He will continue to make that progress, especially when it comes to education. You heard the commitment to education that he made today. And I know he will follow through because that's been the key to our lives. Growing up, neither one of us had much. But we had mothers who loved us and pushed us, who instilled a belief that education was the best shot that we were going to have at life. We are living proof that education is the single best investment we can make in our future and our children's future. And the people of Virginia understand that.

That's why he's going to invest in pre-kindergarten programs and support our teachers and expand access to higher education. He knows the smartest workforce is going to attract the best jobs. And I want to partner with Creigh Deeds, because we're going to make some commitments at the national level. I've already made sure that we strengthen and improve our education system from cradle to graduation, from college through career, so that by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. And we're going to have them right here in Virginia.

Smart decisions, sound investments, a civility to our politics, that's why Virginia's become the Nation's number-one State to do business in. That's why Virginia is going to come out of the other side of this recession stronger and better prepared than before, because of the forward-thinking leadership of Mark Warner and Tim Kaine and Creigh Deeds.

Now, we have to be honest, though. Even though Virginia is weathering this recession, this storm, better than most States, primarily because of this Democratic leadership, I know that too many families in Virginia are still hurting. Unemployment is still over 7 percent. Folks here are still losing their homes or being crushed by health premiums that have doubled over the past 9 years. But without the steps we would have—we've taken, our troubled economy and the pain it's inflicting on Virginia's families would be a lot worse.

I'm always amused when I hear some folks, some critics start talking about, "Well, look at the mess that the economy is in." They seem to have some selective memory. It didn't just happen somehow. [*Laughter*] When my administration took office about 6 months ago, we faced the worst recession since the Great Depression. We were losing an average of 700,000 jobs a month. It was nearly impossible to take out a home loan or a car loan or a student loan or loans for small business to make payroll and keep the doors open. And economists all across the ideological spectrum, left and right, were saying we might be tipping over into a great depression.

At the time, there were some who thought that doing nothing was an option. Remember that?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. I disagreed. I thought we had to act boldly and firmly. And so we took steps to arrest our housing crisis and avert the collapse of our financial system. Less than 1 month after taking office, we enacted the most sweeping recovery package in history. And by the way, we did it without earmarks and the porkbarrel projects that the previous administration had loaded up with.

Now, there's been a lot of misinformation out there about the recovery plan. I hope you don't mind, Virginia, I just want to set the record straight. This is very simple stuff here. The Recovery Act is made up of three parts. The first part, about one-third of the Recovery Act, is a middle class tax cut for 95 percent of working Americans, a tax cut. And by the way, that's exactly what I promised you when I was running for President of the United States. So when you hear the naysayers and the critics saying this plan isn't money well spent, just remember, one-third of it's going right into your pockets. That seems like well spent money to me.

Another third—all right, so one-third tax cuts. Sometimes I see folks outside with signs: Don't raise my taxes. I haven't raised your taxes. [*Laughter*] I've lowered your taxes. That's point number one.

Another third was relief for people and States who had fallen on hard times because of the economic crisis. So we expanded unemployment benefits to help folks who had lost their jobs and were looking for work. That

means—that's made a difference for about 150,000 Virginians. We made health insurance cheaper for families who rely on COBRA after they've lost a job and they're out there looking for a job. We made it 65 percent cheaper. [*Applause*] That's you right there. That's you right there. I've got some testimony. I've got an amen corner right here.

We helped States facing historic budget shortfalls, which prevented layoffs and protected essential services. In Virginia, that means 13,000 folks who are still working in our schools, more than 300 deputy sheriffs who are still keeping communities safe, State colleges and universities like UVA and Virginia Tech that haven't had to raise tuition, because of the recovery package.

So I just want to know: These critics—I want to make sure—are they opposed to the tax cuts that went into your pocket? Are they opposed to making sure that we're not cutting back on vital services and giving States some relief? That's two-thirds of the Recovery Act.

Now, the last third is making the vital investments that are putting people back to work today to create stronger economy tomorrow, the largest new investment of infrastructure in America since Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System back in the 1950s. Around here, that means upgrading the Lake Barton Dam, improving the Fairfax County Parkway, building new roads across northern Virginia to ease congestion and make your lives a little bit better.

So step by step, we are moving forward. The American people understand this recession was years in the making. It didn't just start last month. That bank crisis didn't happen on my watch. Let's get the history straight.

So, you know, and then we start getting into the whole issue of spending. Now, let me tell you, Virginia has a history of prudent fiscal policy. That's what Tim Kaine's been about, that's what Mark Warner's been about, that's what Creigh Deeds is going to be about.

So now you've got folks on the other side of the aisle pointing at the Federal budget and somehow trying to put that at our feet. Well, let's look at the history. When I walked in, we had a $1.3 trillion deficit. That was gift-wrapped and waiting for me when I walked in the Oval Office. [*Laughter*] Without my policies we'd have an even higher deficit going forward. The one exception is the recovery package that we had to do in order to get this economy moving again.

So you can't go out there and charge up the credit card, go on an all kinds of things shopping sprees on things that didn't grow the economy, hand over the bill to us, and then say, "Why haven't you paid it off yet?" I got that bill from you. [*Laughter*] So we've got some work to do. I don't mind, by the way, being responsible. I expect to be held responsible for these issues because I'm the President. But I don't want the folks who created the mess to do a lot of talking. I want them just to get out of the way so we can clean up the mess. I don't mind cleaning up after them, but don't do a lot of talking. Am I wrong, Virginia?

Audience members. No!

The President. So I'm convinced that the actions we've taken in the first 6 months have helped stop our economic freefall. We're losing jobs at half the rate we were at the beginning of this year. Our financial system is no longer on the verge of collapse. The market is up. Housing prices are up for the first time in nearly 3 years. So, we may just be seeing the very beginnings of the end of this recession.

But if we're going to move from recovery to prosperity, we need to rebuild our economy stronger than before. Because even before this crisis hit, we had an economy that was failing to create the kinds of good jobs with rising incomes for middle class families that is the bedrock of America. There was a lot of money being made at the very top, but it wasn't an economy that was built to compete in the 21st century, one where we spend more on health care than any nation but aren't any healthier—that's not sensible—where we've been slow to invest in clean energy technologies that have created new jobs and new industries in other countries, where we watched our graduation rates lag behind too much of the world. That's not a recipe for success.

That's why, even as we work to rescue our economy from this crisis, we're now laying the new foundation for the country to thrive in the

21st century. We are going to prepare every child, everywhere in America, to compete and win with a world-class education. We're going to invest in the clean energy jobs of the future and train our workers for those jobs. We're going to finally protect consumers and bring down the health care costs that are driving this Nation into debt. We're going to pass reform to ensure that a health care system doesn't just work for insurance companies, but for all the people of Virginia and all the people of the United States.

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. Yes we can.

There are those out there who want us to go down the same old path, the path where we just throw up our hands and say, "We can't do anything about education. It's too hard. We can't do anything about health care. It's too tough." A path where our children fall behind, our workers lose out—they watch jobs being shipped overseas—our health care costs keep rising, our oil dependency keeps on growing. All we do is just then bicker and point fingers.

Well, that's not the future I accept for the United States of America. That's not the future that Creigh Deeds accepts for the future of Virginia. That's not what you want for your children and your grandchildren. So we're setting a new course for this Nation. It's the one that Mark Warner and Tim Kaine and Creigh Deeds have already begun blazing right here in Virginia.

They know that leadership is more than just about managing crises. It's about making smart decisions for the future, even in the toughest times. That's what Creigh Deeds will do. And that's why every single one of you is going to have to do the work to put him into office, to carry on that tradition of leadership, to bring about a brighter future for generations of Virginians.

We did not come this far by lowering our sights or scaling back our dreams. That's not the American way. It's not about looking backwards; it's about looking forward. We didn't become the greatest nation on Earth because we just stood still in the face of great challenges, shrugged our shoulders, and said, "No, we can't." We are Americans. We're a forward-looking people. We stare down challenges. We've always faced the future, not with fear, but with determination, not with doubt, but with hope. We've always taken great chances and reached for new horizons and remade the world around us.

Last year, Virginia, you helped lead a movement of Americans who believed that their voices could make a difference, a movement of young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, Black, White, Latino, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled, not disabled. Everybody was involved. It didn't come from Washington, it came from the bottom up. That's what we need to do in this race. That's what Creigh Deeds is committed to. That's what this election is all about.

I need every one of you to knock on doors and make phone calls and get fired up once again so that we can go towards the future, confident with Creigh Deeds leading the great Commonwealth of Virginia.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:02 p.m. at the Hilton McLean Tysons Corner. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Timothy M. Kaine of Virginia and his wife Anne Holton; Sen. Mark R. Warner; and Amanda, Rebecca, and Susannah Deeds, daughters, and Emma Hicklin, mother, of Virginia State Sen. R. Creigh Deeds. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 7.

Remarks on the National Economy
August 7, 2009

Good afternoon, everybody. I'd like to say a few words about the state of our economy and what we're doing to put Americans back to work and build a new foundation for growth.

Last week, we received a report on America's Gross Domestic Product, a key measure of our economic's health, and it showed marked improvement over the last few months. This

morning we received additional signs that the worst may be behind us. Though we lost 247,000 jobs in July, that was nearly 200,000 fewer jobs lost than in June and far fewer than the nearly 700,000 jobs a month that we were losing at the beginning of the year.

Today, we're pointed in the right direction. We're losing jobs at less than half the rate we were when I took office. We've pulled the financial system back from the brink, and a rising market is restoring value to those 401(k)s that are the foundation of a secure retirement. We've enabled families to reduce the payments on their mortgages, making their homes more affordable and reducing the number of foreclosures. We helped revive the credit markets and opened up loans for families and small businesses.

While we've rescued our economy from catastrophe, we've also begun to build a new foundation for growth. That's why we passed an unprecedented Recovery Act less than a month after I took office and did so without any of the earmarks or porkbarrel spending that's so common in Washington. Now, there's a lot of misinformation about the Recovery Act, so let me repeat what it is and what it is not. The plan is divided into three parts.

One-third of the money is for tax relief that's going directly to families and small businesses. For Americans struggling to pay rising bills with shrinking wages, we've kept a campaign promise to put a middle class tax cut in the pocket of 95 percent of working families, a tax cut that began showing up in paychecks about 4 months ago. We also cut taxes for small businesses on the investments they make and substantially increased loans through the Small Business Administration.

Another third of the money in the Recovery Act is for emergency relief that is helping folks who have borne the brunt of this recession. For Americans who were laid off, we expanded unemployment benefits, a measure that's already made a difference in the lives of 12 million Americans. We're making health insurance 65 percent cheaper for families that rely on COBRA while they're looking for work. And for States facing historic budget shortfalls, we provided assistance that saved jobs of tens of thousands of teachers and police officers and other public service workers.

So these two thirds of the Recovery Act have helped people weather the worst phase of this recession, while saving jobs and stabilizing our economy. The last third is dedicated to the vital investments that are putting people back to work today to create a stronger economy tomorrow. Part of that is the largest new investment of infrastructure in America since Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System back in the 1950s. These are jobs rebuilding America: upgrading roads and bridges and renovating schools and hospitals.

Now, as we begin to put an end to this recession, we have to consider what comes next, because we can't afford to return to an economy based on inflated profits and maxed-out credit cards, an economy where we depend on dirty and outdated sources of energy, an economy where we're burdened by soaring health care costs that serve only the special interests. This won't create sustainable growth, it won't shrink our deficit, and it won't create jobs.

And that's why we've put an end to the status quo that got us into this crisis. We cannot turn back to the failed policies of the past, nor can we stand still. Now is the time to build a new foundation for a stronger, more productive economy that creates the jobs of the future.

And this foundation has to be supported by several pillars to our economy. We need a historic commitment to education so that America is the most highly educated, well trained workforce in the world. We need health insurance reform that brings down costs, provides more security for folks who have insurance and affordable options for those who don't. And we need to provide incentives that will create new clean energy sources for our industries. That's where the jobs of the future are, that is the competition that will shape the 21st century, and that's a race that America must win.

So we have a lot further to go. As far as I'm concerned, we will not have a true recovery as long as we're losing jobs, and we won't rest until every American that is looking for work can find a job. I have no doubt that we can make

these changes. It won't be easy, though. Change is hard, especially in Washington. We have a steep mountain to climb, and we started in a very deep valley. But I have faith in the American people, in their capacity for hard work and innovation, in their commitment to one another, and their courage to face adversity.

We've seen already that strength of character over the course of this recession. Across the country, people have persevered even as bills have piled up and work has been hard to come by. Everywhere I go, I meet Americans who've kept their confidence in their country and in our future. That's how we've pulled the economy back from the brink. That's why we're turning this economy around. I am convinced that we can see a light at the end of the tunnel, but now we're going to have to move forward with confidence and conviction to reach the promise of a new day.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:16 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Statement on 11th Anniversary of the Embassy Terrorist Attacks in Kenya and Tanzania

August 7, 2009

Today marks the 11th anniversary of the terrorist attacks against the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. In Kenya, 218 people lost their lives and over 5,000 were injured; the blast in Dar es Salaam killed 11 people and wounded more than 85 others. Our thoughts are with those who were injured and the families and loved ones of those who were lost in these tragic events.

These attacks in East Africa are sad examples of Al Qaida's determination to kill innocent men, women, and children in many countries, regardless of their religion, race, or nationality. The memory of the attacks in Kenya and Tanzania remind us that we must always be vigilant in working with our allies to bring these terrorists to justice, to prevent these types of attacks from happening again, and to advance peace and security for Americans, Kenyans, Tanzanians, and people around the world.

The President's Weekly Address

August 8, 2009

On Friday, we received better news than we expected about the state of our economy. We learned that we lost 247,000 jobs in July, some 200,000 fewer jobs lost than in June and far fewer than the nearly 700,000 a month we were losing at the beginning of the year. Of course, this is little comfort to anyone who saw their job disappear in July and to the millions of Americans who are looking for work, and I will not rest until anyone who's looking for work can find a job.

Still, this month's job numbers are a sign that we've begun to put the brakes on this recession and that the worst may be behind us. But we must do more than rescue our economy from this immediate crisis. We must rebuild it stronger than before. We must lay a new foundation for future growth and prosperity, and a key pillar of a new foundation is health insurance reform, reform that we are now closer to achieving than ever before.

There are still details to be hammered out. There are still differences to be reconciled, but we are moving toward a broad consensus on reform. Four committees in Congress have produced legislation, an unprecedented level of agreement on a difficult and complex challenge. In addition to the ongoing work in Congress, providers have agreed to bring down costs. Drug companies have agreed to make prescription drugs more affordable for seniors. The AARP supports reform because of the better care it will offer to seniors. And the American Nurses Association and the American Medical

Association, which represent the millions of nurses and doctors who know our health care system best, all support reform as well.

As we draw close to finalizing and passing real health insurance reform, the defenders of the status quo and political point-scorers in Washington are growing fiercer in their opposition. In recent days and weeks, some have been using misleading information to defeat what they know is the best chance of reform we have ever had. And that's why it is important, especially now, as Senators and Representatives head home and meet with their constituents, for you the American people to have all the facts.

So let me explain what reform will mean for you. And let me start by dispelling the outlandish rumors that reform will promote euthanasia or cut Medicaid or bring about a government takeover of health care. That's simply not true. This isn't about putting government in charge of your health insurance; it's about putting you in charge of your health insurance. Under the reforms we seek, if you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. If you like your health care plan, you can keep your health care plan.

And while reform is obviously essential for the 46 million Americans who don't have health insurance, it will also provide more stability and security to the hundreds of millions who do. Right now we have a system that works well for the insurance industry, but that doesn't always work well for you. What we need, and what we will have when we pass health insurance reform, are consumer protections to make sure that those who have insurance are treated fairly and that insurance companies are held accountable.

We'll require insurance companies to cover routine checkups and preventive care, like mammograms, colonoscopies, or eye and foot exams for diabetics, so we can avoid chronic illnesses that cost too many lives and too much money.

We'll stop insurance companies from denying coverage because of a person's medical history. I will never forget watching my own mother as she fought cancer in her final days, worrying about whether her insurer would claim her illness was a preexisting condition. I have met so many Americans who worry about the same thing. That's why under these reforms, insurance companies will no longer be able to deny coverage because of a previous illness or injury. And insurance companies will no longer be allowed to drop or water down coverage for someone who has become seriously ill. Your health insurance ought to be there for you when it counts and reform will make sure it is.

With reform, insurance companies will also have to limit how much you can be charged for out-of-pocket expenses. And we'll stop insurance companies from placing arbitrary caps on the amount of coverage you can receive in a given year or a lifetime, because no one in America should go broke because of illness.

In the end, the debate about health insurance reform boils down to a choice between two approaches. The first is almost guaranteed to double health costs over the next decade, leave millions more Americans uninsured, leave those with insurance vulnerable to arbitrary denials of coverage, and bankrupt State and Federal governments. That's the status quo. That's the health care system we have right now.

So we can either continue this approach, or we can choose another one, one that will protect people against unfair insurance practices, provide quality, affordable insurance to every American, and bring down rising costs that are swamping families, businesses, and our budgets. That's the health care system we can bring about with reform.

There are those who are focused on the so-called politics of health care, who are trying to exploit differences or concerns for political gain. And that's to be expected. That's Washington. But let's never forget that this isn't about politics. This is about people's lives. This is about people's businesses. This is about America's future. That's what is at stake. And that's why health insurance reform is so important. And that's why we must get this done and why we will get this done by the end of this year.

Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:20 p.m. on August 7 in the Red Room at the White House for broadcast on August 8. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 7, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on August 8.

The President's News Conference With President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada in Guadalajara, Mexico

August 10, 2009

President Calderon. Right honorable Mr. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada, Right Honorable Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, ladies and gentlemen, representatives of the media, national as well as international: The leaders from the United States, Canada, and Mexico have completed two fruitful workdays for the benefit of our conationals. The leaders for North America share the vision and insight for one—for only regional community that is safe, secure, and competitive, that can face successfully the challenges of the present and the future.

We coincide in pointing out that in an age marked by globalization, the challenges can only be overcome jointly, thus the importance of keeping the dialogue, trust, and cooperations amongst our three countries. Americans, Canadians, and Mexicans have reiterated that the values upon which our societies are founded are democracy, freedom, justice, and the respect of human rights.

Our three nations have reiterated our decision to combat and struggle of the transnational organized crime in order to bring about more security to our communities. The struggles we have led in Mexico for the rule of law and the security of our Mexican people forces us to stop the traffic of weapons and of money that go from north to south that strengthen and nourish organized crime gangs. The notions of responsibility, coresponsibility, accountability, the exchange of information, and the building of our institutions should be the guidelines for our cooperation.

In this international crisis context, the three states that make up the North American region have to take the leadership and foster and boost the necessary measures to recover our economic growth. In our task, we have had to implement countercyclical measures in the three countries that have been put into action. And in a coordinated manner, we can stabilize our economies and thus bring about trustworthiness and certainty in regard to the future of the global economy.

It is also necessary to build our financial international institutions such as the World Fund, the International Monetary Fund, which are fundamental to guarantee the flow of the financial resources. In the case of Latin America, the support that will enable us to recapitalize the Inter-American Bank for Development will be the best action for help and commitment in regard to the poor countries in the region on behalf of the North American countries.

I am certain that at the next G–20 meeting that shall take place in Pittsburgh, United States, will be a great opportunity to build the necessary agreements to reform these organizations that are key in the recovery of our economies and our reprisal. I thank President Obama for fostering this meeting in Pittsburgh.

And likewise, the United States, Mexico, and Canada have to restart our agreements. We recognize that it is essential to abide by NAFTA and to resolve the pending topics that impede us to reach greater regional competitiveness. And it is important to see how we are going to fulfill our commitments in regard to the environment and in regard to our labor domains linked to the commercial agreements, the trade agreements we have amongst our countries. I am convinced that only in tapping the advantages offered by our economic complementarities, in terms of investments, labor, technologies, and natural resources, we shall be successful in a world that is ferociously competing.

At this summit, we have reached important agreements such as boosting the standardization

of the regulations and certifications of our products, as well as the sanitary procedures and fight to sanitary procedures that can be simplified, as well as increasing without any losses, increasing the economic competitiveness of our region. The objective is to have in—secure and efficient conditions, these procedures to be implemented with no bureaucratic or far-fetched redtape in our offices. And this will diminish—decrease the prices for the staples and food and improve the competitiveness of our economies.

On the other hand, on the bilateral aspects, Mexico and the United States will launch modernization initiatives at our common borders with determined terms in order to promote the regional competitiveness actions. And Mexico commends and is pleased to say that we're going to inaugurate the first international bridge that is currently being built after so many years between the United States and Mexico.

The United States, Mexico, and Canada have coincided in the importance to face the repercussions of pragmatic change. The cost is very high, but the price we shall pay for lack of actions is not to be calculated—cannot possibly be calculated. We coincide that we have to foster the global agreement in Copenhagen and the instrumentation for a green fund that will finance and support mitigation and adaptation actions in regard to the global scale of the climatic change. We need to make progress in regard to clean energies and technologies, as well as the development of our carbon bonus market in order to have a regional market. North America has to be recognized as a responsible region and must set the example for the world in terms of environmental cooperation amongst countries with different levels of development.

Cooperation and solidarity amongst the North American region has to prevail at all moments, and thus it was demonstrated last April when our three countries faced the emergence of this new virus, A1H1—HN1. And working together, we showed our highest expressions of responsibility, accountability, and transparency. And because we alerted timely the other regions in the hemisphere, they had the opportunity to implement preventive measures in order to abate the propagation of the virus and to avoid as far as possible its lethal repercussions. H1N1, as we know, will be back this winter. We are getting prepared, all three countries, to face in a responsible manner this contingency and abate its impacts for our people.

First Minister, Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, at this summit, the representatives of the United States, Canada, and Mexico have held an open and straightforward dialogue as corresponds countries that share values, that were to consolidate the right conditions for development, and that have been able to found a successful society based on brotherly and responsible relationships. We believe in a North American region that is united, that is prosperous and wealthy, that is able to build a better future for the forthcoming generations.

And I want to give the floor now to Mr. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister for Canada.

Prime Minister Harper. Thank you, President Calderon. Thank you to the Mexican people for their hospitality, for their warmth. And thank you to President Obama for your straightforward exchanges, so positive on our priorities. These stakes consisted mainly of the economy, health, and security in the North American region and consisted—and focused on energy, environment, and climate change in regard to the North American economy and the global economy.

And thanks to the solid results in Canada with regard to financial regulations and fiscal actions—have been very positive contribution. It's been important that since we are getting close to the G–20 meeting, we have to underscore that countries have to go on with the reinforcement of their financial national/international institutions and to take the timely financial measures and to keep the markets open and to resist against protectionism.

In regard to the health domain and in regard to the influenza A1H1, it has been a threat, but the excellent cooperation amongst our three countries has helped us to restrain the repercussions of this plague, and we shall focus on that even more.

In regard to security, Canada recognizes the courageous commitment taken by President Calderon to combat organized crime in Mexico. We commend him for his efforts and since his actions have touched all of us.

And we are still making the greatest efforts in Canada to find a pacific resolution for Honduras. We have to reinstate the democratic governance and the rule of law in that country.

In regard to the energy and the climate change, and since our economies are integrated, we have discussed about the importance of working together on a North American focus against the climate change and in order to assure and guarantee a new international covenant that is efficient and truly global.

And to finish, Canada, the United States, and Mexico are good neighbors and good friends too. As sovereign countries in a modern world, we are independent and interdependent both, and I can't wait to see it at the G–20 and to welcome you at the summit in Canada for the leaders of North America next year.

[*At this point, Prime Minister Harper continued in English.*]

Just once again, thanks to President Calderon and to the Mexican people for their hospitality. Thanks also to President Obama for our candid and constructive exchanges on our priority issues. Those priority issues fitted into three broad categories: the economy; North American health and security; and energy, environment, and climate change.

On the economy, because of Canada's strong record of financial—on financial regulation and fiscal management, we provided an informed voice at these meetings. As we approach the G–20 summit in Pittsburgh, we continue to emphasize that countries must strengthen financial regulations and institutions, continue to implement timely economic stimulus, and maintain open markets to resist protectionism.

On North America health and security, we talked about our shared and effective response thus far to H1N1. It is a cross-border threat to all of us. The excellent cooperation among these our three countries was effective in helping to manage the initial outbreak, and we will continue our cooperative efforts.

On security, Canada recognizes the courageous commitment of President Calderon in taking on the drug traffickers. We are supporting these efforts, as it is a shared challenge for all of us in North America.

Also, on international peace and security, Canada supports ongoing OAS efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the political crisis in Honduras. We must restore both democratic governance and the rule of law.

To—sorry, excuse me, I just about missed energy and climate change. Given the integrated nature of our economies, we did talk at some length about the importance of working together on a North American approach to climate change and also on doing our best to ensure that out of Copenhagen and going forward we reach an effective and genuinely international new world protocol on greenhouse gas emissions.

To conclude, Canada, the United States, and Mexico are good neighbors and also good friends. As sovereign countries in a modern world, we are both independent and interdependent. I'm looking forward to seeing both President Calderon and President Obama at the G–20, looking forward to hosting both of you next year at Canada's summit in our great country.

Thank you.

President Obama. Good morning, and *buenos dias*. I want to thank my great friend President Calderon for his hospitality and for hosting us at this important summit, as well as my good friend Prime Minister Stephen Harper. And I want to thank the people of Guadalajara and Mexico for the incredible warmth they've shown us on this my second trip to Mexico as President.

Here in Mexico the word is *juntos*, and in Canada it's *ensemble*, but no matter how we say it, we come here today—three nations, one continent—because of the challenges and opportunities that we will be facing together.

Like our magnificent surroundings today, this city could not be a more fitting venue. Here in Guadalajara, we see all the richness of Mexico's heritage: its arts, its architecture, its vitality, and its culture. And we also see all the possibilities of Mexico's future: the innovation,

high-tech industries, and entrepreneurship that makes this one of our hemisphere's most dynamic cities.

Here in Guadalajara, we also see our continent coming together—Mexicans, Canadians, Americans—as tourists, as neighbors, educators, and business partners, each bringing their unique traditions, each bound by mutual respect. Indeed, in the 21st century, North America is defined not simply by our borders, but by our bonds. And that is the spirit that defined the very productive summit that we had here today.

First, we agreed that we had to work together to restore our common prosperity. The global recession has cost jobs and hurt families from Toronto to Toledo to Tijuana. So we renew our commitment to work together in Ottawa, Washington, and Mexico City. Building on our progress at the G–8 and G–20 summits, we agreed to continue to take aggressive, coordinated action to restore economic growth and create jobs for our workers, including workers in the North American auto industry.

Because so much of our common prosperity and millions of jobs depend on trade that flows across our borders—billions of dollars worth of trade every day—we reaffirmed the need to reject protectionism. We recommitted ourselves to the infrastructure investments, the commonsense regulations, and intellectual property protections upon which trade thrives. We are among each other's largest trading partners. As we work together towards lasting prosperity, we need to expand that trade, not restrict it.

I would note that our common prosperity also depends on orderly, legal migration. All three of our nations have been enriched by our ties of family and community. I think of my own brother-in law, who is Canadian. I think of the many Mexican Americans from Jalisco who have found a home in Los Angeles and Texas and in my hometown of Chicago. At the same time, Americans, Mexicans, and Canadians all expect their borders to be safe and secure. And that is why my administration will continue to work to fix America's broken immigration system in a way that is in keeping with our traditions of being both a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants.

And because our future prosperity also depends on clean energy economies, we built on our bilateral efforts to invest in renewable energy and green jobs, and we recommitted ourselves to the historic goals announced last month in Italy. Nations like the United States and Canada will take the lead by reducing emissions by 80 percent by 2050, and we will work with other nations to cut global emissions in half. Indeed, we've made progress toward the concrete goals that will be negotiated at the Copenhagen climate change summit in December. And I again want to commend Mexico for its leadership in curbing greenhouse gas emissions and President Calderon for his innovative proposals to help developing countries build clean, sustainable economies.

Second, we reiterated our abiding commitment to the common safety and security of our people. In response to the H1N1 pandemic, our three governments have worked closely, collaboratively, and responsibly. With science as our guide, we resolved to continue taking all necessary preparations and precautions to prepare for the upcoming flu season and protect the health of our people. And this challenge transcends borders, and so must our response.

We also resolved to continue confronting the urgent threat to our common security from the drug cartels that are causing so much violence and death in our countries. As I've said on many occasions, I heartily commend President Calderon and his Government for their determination and courage in taking on these cartels. And the President reaffirmed his Government's commitment to transparency, accountability, and human rights as they wage this difficult but necessary fight.

The United States will remain a full partner in this effort. We will work to make sure Mexico has the support it needs to dismantle and defeat the cartels. And the United States will also meet its responsibilities by continuing our efforts to reduce the demand for drugs and continuing to strengthen the security of our shared border, not only to protect the American people but to stem the illegal southbound

flow of American guns and cash that helps fuel this extraordinary violence.

Third, we reaffirmed our abiding commitment to our common values, including peace, democracy, and human rights. And in particular, we discussed the coup in Honduras. As has been mentioned, our three nations stand united on this issue. President Zelaya remains the democratically elected President. For the sake of the Honduran people, democratic and constitutional order must be restored. And we will continue to work with others, especially the Organization of American States, to achieve a negotiated and peaceful solution.

And finally, we pledged to continue all these efforts. I look forward to welcoming Prime Minister Harper to Washington in September. I look forward to welcoming both of my friends at the G–20 summit in Pittsburgh, where I hope to reciprocate President Calderon's hospitality.

Our progress today is a reminder that no nation can meet the challenges of our time on our own. Our common aspirations can only be achieved if we work together. And that's what the nearly half-billion people in North America expect from us, so that's what we will do.

Thank you very much.

Moderator. Let's move on to the question-and-answer session. This will be one question per country, and we'll start off with Mexico.

Mexico-U.S. Drug Control Cooperation/Immigration Reform/Human Rights in Mexico

Q. Good afternoon, heads of state. President Obama, there are certain questions about violation of human rights here in Mexico and all these problems of fighting drug trafficking. Are you going to certify Mexico? And how can we move forward with the Merida Initiative? We've also been concerned about any attempt against Felipe Calderon's life. We know about certain threats and insecurity that prevails. This, of course, is certainly related to your country. We're concerned about the visa problem too. But what comments would you have regarding all these questions?

President Obama. I didn't get a translation on that one. [*Laughter*] So it sounded like a very good question. [*Laughter*] Here, I think it's coming. Go ahead.

Q. We're concerned about the violation of human rights here in Mexico as we fight against drug trafficking. What are your concerns regarding this? And we'd also like to know if Mexico is going to be certified, and if you will help and apply resources for the Merida Initiative? We've also heard about some attempts against the life of President Felipe Hinojosa Calderon. Do you have any knowledge of this?

And we're also concerned about national security, we're concerned about visas, et cetera. We'd like to know, is there any possibility that you might turn this around, that we might not have any limit on visas?

President Obama. Well, the—I'll just address the first two questions that seem to apply to the United States. Number one, we have been very supportive of the Merida Initiative, and we will continue to be supportive. And we have already seen resources transferred, equipment transferred, in order to help President Calderon in what is a very courageous effort to deal with a drug cartel—set of drug cartels that are not only resulting in extraordinary violence to the people of Mexico but are also undermining institutions like the police and the judiciary system that, unless stopped, will be very damaging to the country.

Now, with respect to the conduct of this battle against the cartels, I have great confidence in President Calderon's administration applying the law enforcement techniques that are necessary to curb the power of the cartels, but doing so in a way that's consistent with human rights. And we discussed this in our bilateral meeting, and I am confident that as the national police are trained, as the coordination between the military and local police officials is improved, there is going to be increased transparency and accountability and that human rights will be observed.

The biggest, by far, violators of human rights right now are the cartels themselves that are kidnapping people and extorting people and encouraging corruption in these regions. That's what needs to be stopped. That's what President Calderon is committed to doing, and that's what I'm committed to helping President Calderon accomplish as long as he is President of Mexico.

Prime Minister Harper. Are you going to answer, or just me?

President Calderon. Do you want—[*inaudible*]—and I after?

Prime Minister Harper. Okay. On the question of visas, it's important to understand the imposition of visa is due to one thing and one thing only, and that is the dramatic rise we have seen over the last few years, and this year in particular, in the number of bogus refugee claims being made from Mexico into Canada.

It's important to understand that this decision, first of all, has nothing to do with the actions of the Mexican Government. The Mexican Government has cooperated with us in efforts to stem this particular problem, to limit this particular problem. It continues to work with us in ways we might reverse it.

But the underlying problem, as I've said to President Calderon and others, the underlying program—problem is in the Canadian refugee laws. It is simply far too easy in Canada to make a bogus refugee claim as a way of entering the country. And we have to change that. It is unfair to those who are legitimate refugees. It is also unfair to the hundreds of thousands of people who are working through our immigration system to become immigrants to this country—to our country.

So as I say, we will continue to work with Mexican authorities to try and limit this problem. But in the absence of legislative change, it is very difficult for our governments to control this other than through the imposition of visa. It is the only tool available to us right now. So we need additional tools from our Parliament to stem the flow of bogus refugee claimants and also to have additional tools to deal with this kind of problem.

President Calderon. Yes. Let me address these three topics, which were very important to us. First of all, my Government has an absolute and categorical commitment with human rights. The struggle, the battle we are fighting against organized crime is precisely to preserve the human rights of the Mexican people: right to safety, to security, to personal safety and integrity, and the right to have a safe family; the right to work without being really molested or perturbed; and the struggle for the security and safety of the Mexican people.

Obviously, we have a strong commitment to protect human rights of everybody, the victims and even of the criminals themselves. And this is how it has been, this is how it will continue to be, and this is how the federal police will act, the attorney generals and armed forces will act. In all of these cases, there have been a very scrupulous effort to try to protect human rights in all cases.

And anyone who says the contrary certainly would have to prove this—any case, just one case, where the proper authority has not acted in a correct way, that the competent authorities have not punished anyone who has abused their authority, whether they be police officers, whether they be soldiers, or anyone else. We have a clear commitment with human rights. We have met this commitment, and we will continue to do so, not because of any money that might come or come through the Merida Initiative or what's said in the U.S. Congress, because we have the strong commitment to human rights. And I certainly in a personal sense for several decades now, and I have always had this commitment.

I have some details about what you have pointed out, but in any case, it certainly won't be the first or the last occasion on which we might hear something about an attempt against my personal—about my life, my person. But once again, the Government just can't stop; it can't be deterred. We know that we are destroying their criminal organization. We're hitting them hard. We're hitting at the heart of their organizations. We're making them back away. And we know—they know that we're not only taking an initiative in the struggle against crime, but we are actually being able to protect, to defend our country better as time goes by.

This is not a type of vengeance, of getting back at anyone, but we want to make sure that Mexico is a safe place to live in, that we will be able to move forward in this—[*inaudible*]. We're not just talking about this organizations, but whether our basic objective is to provide security, safety for the Mexican people. This is something that Mexican people are entitled to,

that their family, that their children can go out into the streets, they can go out to play, they can go to school, they can make progress and to fulfill their aspirations; that Mexico be a free country, free of delinquency, free of violence; that Mexico will be a safe country. And in this struggle, we're not going to be intimidated, nor are they going to put a stop to our efforts.

Once again, I certainly hope that Mexican society recognizes all of the efforts we're making along these lines, the police force who have been victims of attempts and of cowardly acts by the criminals, all the efforts carried out by Mexican marines, by soldiers, and the different attorney general's officers, because we are committed to this ideal to have a safe Mexico, to have a safe country. And these are values that we believe in, and it's certainly stronger than any threat that could be made against us, about any threat whatsoever.

So once again, we have had dialogues with Prime Minister Harper on several different occasions, as we did on this occasion, on—about the summit and the matter of visas for Mexican visitors. We've talked openly, frankly, and certainly—Mexico certainly feels very bad about this decision, about this rejection, even though, of course, it is a privilege of the Canadian Government to stipulate this. But it certainly gets in the way of a good relationship, of what Prime Minister Harper and I are doing to have good relations between our two countries. And the explanations that Prime Harper has mentioned, there certainly is a problem with this bogus refugee claim problem, and this has led to an abuse of the system.

So we're going to try to work together, to collaborate together. We're doing this here in Mexico to try to do away with the underlying causes of this abuse regarding the general system for receiving refugees in Canada.

Once again, for me it's very clear that as the President of Mexico, that I certainly have the obligation of ensuring that a specific topic on the bilateral agenda not deter reaching our full potential of other matters on the agenda.

And once again, here lies the great opportunity in this particular area of economic complementarities of the two—of the three countries' economies, and that this will take our whole region up to a higher state of competitiveness and to the benefit of our people. But these are the lines we've been working along, and I think we have been making great strides in this sense. And we certainly will continue to work along these lines in a frank and open way with Prime Minister Harper and President Obama.

Trade/Health Care

Q. Well, let me preface this by saying that we only get one question each, so I hope you will excuse me for being inexcusably longwinded. It's actually a two-parter. [*Laughter*] And the first part of this question is for the three leaders, primarily President Obama. And I'd appreciate it——

President Calderon. Could you use the microphone?

Q. And I would appreciate it if the Prime Minister, for the benefit of my Francophone colleagues, could answer in French as well.

The "Buy American" has caused considerable concern outside the United States. I am wondering what you discussed about "Buy American" at this meeting, and also what power you personally have to rescind this measure and whether you intend to use that power.

Now, on a not completely related topic, health care has been an issue of tremendous debate in your country, and Canadians have looked on with some fascination as our health care system has become a political football in your country. I'd like to ask Prime Minister Harper and President Obama whether there are elements of the Canadian health care system, particularly the public model, which are worth emulating.

President Obama. Well, first of all, with respect to the "Buy American" provisions, I want to assure you that your Prime Minister raises this with me every time we see each other. So that's important to note, that he is expressing, I think, his country's concerns.

I think it's also important to keep it in perspective that, in fact, we have not seen some sweeping steps towards protectionism. There was a very particular provision that was in our recovery package, our stimulus package. It did not extend beyond that. It was WTO compliant. It was not something that I thought was

necessary, but it was introduced at a time when we had a very severe economic situation, and it was important for us to act quickly and not get bogged down in debates around this particular provision.

Prime Minister Harper and I have discussed this, and there may be mechanisms whereby States and local jurisdictions can work with the Provinces to allow for cross-border procurement practices that expand the trading relationship. But I do think it's important to keep this in perspective: This is—in no way has endangered the billions of dollars of trade taking place between our two countries. It's not a general provision, but it was restricted to a very particular aspect of our recovery package.

With respect to the health care debate, we are having a vigorous debate in the United States, and I think that's a healthy thing. The reason it's necessary is because we are on a currently unsustainable path. We spend far more per person on health care than any nation on Earth. The—our outcomes in terms of various measures of well being don't rank us at the top. We're not doing better than a lot of other advanced, developed countries that are spending much less per person.

Individual families are being bankrupted because of the lack of insurance. We've got 46, 47 million people without health insurance in our country. And for those who do have health insurance, they are always at risk of private insurers eliminating their insurance because of a preexisting condition or because of—they lose a job or they have changed jobs.

So the final aspect of it is, is that our health care inflation is going up so rapidly that our Federal budget simply can't sustain it, nor can businesses that are increasingly having to make decisions whether they hire more workers or eliminate health care, whether they stop providing coverage or they force more costs on to their workers. So the whole system is not working well.

Now, how do we change it? When it's one-sixth of the U.S. economy, there are going to be a lot of opinions. And Congress has moved forward, and we are closer to achieving a serious health reform package than we have been in the last 40 to 50 years. But there is going to continue to be a vigorous debate.

I've said that the Canadian model works for Canada; it would not work for the United States, in part simply because we've evolved differently. We have a employer-based system and a private-based health care system that stands side by side with Medicare and Medicaid and our Veterans Administration health care system. And so we've got to develop a uniquely American approach to this problem.

This, by the way, is a problem that all countries are going to have to deal with at some level because if medical inflation continues at the pace that it's going, everybody's budgets are going to be put under severe strain. And so what we're trying to do is make sure that we've got a sensible plan that provides coverage for everybody, that continues the role of the private marketplace, but provides people who don't have health insurance or have fallen through the cracks in the private marketplace a realistic and meaningful option. And we've got to do it in a way that also changes our delivery system so that we're not engaged in the kind of wasteful, inefficient medical spending that is so costly to us.

So I suspect that we're going to have continued vigorous debate. I suspect that you Canadians will continue to get dragged in by those who oppose reform, even though I've said nothing about Canadian health care reform. I don't find Canadians particularly scary, but I guess some of the opponents of reform think that they make a good boogeyman. I think that's a mistake. And I suspect that once we get into the fall and people look at the actual legislation that's being proposed, that more sensible and reasoned arguments will emerge, and we're going to get this passed.

Sorry to take so long on the question.

Prime Minister Harper. With respect to your first question, yesterday we discussed this problem. I'm very happy to recently see that it's an agreement among the Provinces and the federation to have a common front with respect to this problem. There have been a lot of discussions among American and Canadian ministers, ministers of trade, and also our public officials. These talks will continue once I

meet again with President Obama over the next couple of months.

With respect to health care, the only thing I could say is the Canadians certainly support their own system, and the rest is really an American debate.

And it's up to the Provinces, for example, in Canada——

[*Prime Minister Harper continued in English.*]

On "Buy American," we did have a good discussion, as President Obama said. I'm very happy to see that our Provinces and the Federal Government have recently come to an agreement to work collectively on this matter, which is largely, actually, within their jurisdiction since this concerns subnational procurement. Our respective trade ministers have been talking, officials are talking, and we anticipate, I anticipate that President Obama and I will be discussing this at greater length in our upcoming discussions.

On the American health care debate, on the debate over the system of health care, as we know, as you know well, Canadians support their own health care system. As for the rest of this question, my only answer is that this is an American debate and a responsibility of the Provinces.

Moderator. Ginger Thompson, New York Times.

Immigration Reform/Situation in Honduras/ Border Security

Q. I'd like to start with President Obama, please. Given the fight that you're having to wage for health care, I wonder if you can tell us what you think the prospects are for immigration reform, for comprehensive immigration reform, which you've said is your goal, and whether you think that the blows you're taking now on health care and that the Democrats are likely to take around the midterm elections will make it hard, if not impossible, to achieve comprehensive immigration reform in this term, and what you've told President Calderon about that.

President Calderon, I'd like to hear a little bit about your thoughts on Honduras. There have been some in Latin America who have said that the United States has not acted strongly enough to return President Zelaya to power. And I wonder if you could talk a little bit about how you feel about what the United States should be doing or could be doing to restore democratic order in Honduras.

And, Prime Minister Harper, a few months ago, the Homeland Security Secretary of the United States went to Canada—or at least aggravated Canadian sensibilities when she compared the Canadian border to the Mexican border. And I wonder what you think about that and how you feel about the United States using some of the enforcement strategies adopted on the southern border in the north. Thank you.

President Obama. That's all? [*Laughter*]

Q. That's all, Mr. President.

President Obama. Well, first of all, Ginger, I don't know if you're doing some prognosticating about the outcome of the midterm elections, which are over a year away. I anticipate we'll do just fine. And I think when all is said on health care reform, the American people are going to be glad that we acted to change an unsustainable system so that more people have coverage, we're bending the cost curve, and we're getting insurance reform so that people don't get dropped because of preexisting conditions or other issues.

So understand, though, I'm not acting based on short-term political calculations. I'm looking at what's best for the country long term. If I had been making short-term political calculations, I wouldn't be standing here as President, because nobody calculated that I could win the Presidency.

With respect to immigration reform, I continue to believe that is also in the long-term interests of the United States. We have a broken immigration system. Nobody denies it. And if we continue on the path we're on, we will continue to have tensions with our Mexican neighbors; we will continue to have people crossing the borders in a way that is dangerous for them, unfair for those who are applying legally to immigrate; we're going to continue to have employers who are exploiting workers because they're not within a legal system and so, oftentimes, are receiving less than minimum wage or don't have overtime or being abused in other

fashion. That's going to depress U.S. wages. It's causing ongoing tensions inside the United States. It's not fair, and it's not right, and we're going to change it.

Now, I've got a lot on my plate, and it's very important for us to sequence these big initiatives in a way where they don't all just crash at the same time. And what we've said is, in the fall when we come back, we're going to complete health care reform. We still have to act on energy legislation that has passed the House, but the Senate, I'm sure, is going to have its own ideas about how it wants to approach it. We still have financial regulatory reform that has to get done because we don't want a situation in which irresponsible actions in the global financial markets can precipitate another crisis. That's a pretty big stack of bills.

Fortunately, what we've been able to do is to begin meeting with both Democrats and Republicans from the House and the Senate. Secretary Napolitano is coordinating these discussions, and I would anticipate that before the year is out, we will have draft legislation along with sponsors potentially in the House and the Senate who are ready to move this forward, and when we come back next year, that we should be in a position to start acting.

Now, am I going to be able to snap my fingers and get this done? No. This is going to be difficult; it's going to require bipartisan cooperation. There are going to be demagogues out there who try to suggest that any form of pathway for legalization for those who are already in the United States is unacceptable. And those are fights that I'd have to have if my poll numbers are at 70 or if my poll numbers are at 40. That's just the nature of the U.S. immigration debate.

But ultimately, I think the American people want fairness. And we can create a system in which you have strong border security, we have an orderly process for people to come in, but we're also giving an opportunity for those who are already in the United States to be able to achieve a pathway to citizenship so that they don't have to live in the shadows and their children and their grandchildren can have a full participation in the United States. So I'm confident we can get it done.

Oh, excuse me, I know this wasn't directed at me, but I just want to make one quick point on Honduras, because you repeated something that I've heard before. The same critics who say that the United States has not intervened enough in Honduras are the same people who say that we're always intervening and Yankees need to get out of Latin America. You can't have it both ways.

We have been very clear in our belief that President Zelaya was removed from office illegally, that it was a coup, and that he should return. We have cooperated with all the international bodies in sending that message. Now, if these critics think that it's appropriate for us to suddenly act in ways that in every other context they consider inappropriate, then I think what that indicates is, is that maybe there's some hypocrisy involved in their approach to U.S.-Latin America relations that certainly is not going to guide my administration's policies.

President Calderon. Thank you. I will now make the most of this question. Now, in regard to migration, actually many of the people who work active in the United States, who live in the shadow, live in this State—or come from Jalisco, this State. These are people who have migrated in order to build a better future for their families. All of them, or most of them, have enormously contributed to the American society and the American economy, and it is unthinkable to see that the U.S., the main power, the main economic power in the world, without the contribution of the Mexican laborers and workers. This is not only a good will statement.

And in—during our meeting, we handed the delegations the benefits of North America and what the Mexican population represents in terms of age, in regard to the total population in the U.S. The only way to have sustained progress throughout the North American region, especially, is allowing for the natural economic processes, for integration can happen, and this implies the labor mobility that cannot be determined by mandate or by decree.

This is what we have underscored with President Obama during this meeting, to keep on invoking the protection for the Mexican

laborers, whatever their migration conditions are in the United States, and our highest commendments to the way President Obama has tackled this migration issue now.

Aside from defending the rights of the Mexican laborers in the U.S., that one day instead of the Mexican people to have to leave their country because they're hungry or because they have to risk their lives, we need an economic scheme where we have great investments coming from the U.S., hailing from Canada, and opening here the labor opportunities that the Mexicans so need.

I think President Barack Obama has responded to the topic on—or to the issue on Honduras, whatever—what we have discussed and agreed as what needs to be done to build the international actions that have been taken in order to reestablish the democracy in Honduras, to strengthen the OAS and the delegation that is about to meet in Tegucigalpa, to build the mediation actions that Oscar Arias, President for Costa Rica and Nobel Peace—Nobel Prize, is carrying out in order to reestablish the constitutional law in Honduras.

This is not about a person or another. This is not about President Zelaya himself or per se. It is about the constitutional and democratic life that ought to be defended in regard to the international legal framework that we have all agreed upon.

And one more expression: I coincide in the contradiction highlighted by President Obama. Those who have rejected or who have argumented about the intervention of the United States in the region are those who now are claiming for the determination or the intervention of the U.S. in the region, no matter how legal this action might be.

So we have to resort to international law and international instances beyond the intervention of one single state—or even more, the intervention of one single person—to resolve such a dispute and such an issue. This is the path to be taken.

Today, we congratulate ourselves that President Obama is leading the administration of the United States. But in the past, that happened; but in the future, we don't know who might be President next. And I am not of those who share the idea that the U.S. are elected as the ultimate judge and the ultimate, sovereign resolver through the intermediation of the affairs in our countries.

Yes, we have to open the path to the OAS, to the international organizations, to the regional group that we have formed, such as the Rio Group, such as the groups that are friends of North America, the countries that are—that befriend Honduras, that befriend Central America, that befriend Guatemala. These countries must act on our own account, but in observance of the international law and the rules we have settled ourselves. We have to form a group of friends of Honduras that through—with the help of Oscar Arias and with the help of the OAS and their corresponding actions.

Prime Minister Harper. Just briefly, Minister Van Loan and Secretary Napolitano have been—and our officials have been meeting regularly on management of our shared border. I think we have a good, cooperative relationship in that regard. There's, obviously, always work to be done.

Let me be very clear: From the Canadian perspective, we look at our border as a line between the two closest countries on Earth. We have the largest trading relationship of any two countries on Earth, but we also share security concerns. I've said repeatedly, I say again, there is no such thing as a threat to the security of the United States which is not a threat to the security of Canada. That is why Canada has been a steadfast ally of the United States in NAFTA and NORAD for many, many years.

We want to address all the same security issues that the United States wants to address, and we want to do so in a way that doesn't impede commerce and doesn't impede the great social interaction which has made our two countries so close over the decades.

I'm just going to also weigh in a little bit, as a friend of the United States, on that question that was posed to President Obama. If I were an American, I would be really fed up with this kind of hypocrisy; you know, the United States is accused of meddling except when it's accused of not meddling, and the same types of—same types who are demanding the United States to somehow intervene in Honduras, the same type

of people who would condemn longstanding security cooperation between Colombia and the United States, which is being done for legitimate security and drug traffic reasons that is, frankly—that are in the interests of all the countries of this hemisphere.

Mexico and Canada are involved in the mediation effort in supporting—directly supporting the mediation effort of President Arias. I think the United States has been a very—very forcefully articulated its concerns and its desired outcomes in that regard and has been very supportive of those of us who are working in the multilateral process to deal with this serious issue in the hemisphere. So I think that's precisely what we want to see from the United States, is a United States that leads on issues of values, but is very supportive of multilateral attempts to deal with challenges that we all face.

President Obama. Thank you.

President Calderon. Thank you. *Gracias, todos*.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:15 a.m. at the Cabanas Cultural Center. In his remarks, the President referred to his brother-in-law Konrad Ng; and Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano. Prime Minister Harper referred to U.S. Trade Representative Ronald Kirk; and Minister of International Trade and the Asia-Pacific Gateway Stockwell Day and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Peter Van Loan of Canada. President Calderon and a reporter spoke in Spanish, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter. Prime Minister Harper spoke partly in French, and those portions of his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama, President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico, and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada

August 10, 2009

We, the leaders of North America, have come together in Guadalajara to promote the global competitiveness of our region, foster the well being of our citizens, and make our countries more secure. We build our collaboration on the understanding that our deepening ties are a source of strength and that challenges and opportunities in one North American country can and do affect us all. North American cooperation is rooted in shared values, complementary strengths, and the dynamism of our peoples. We are confident that working together we can help our societies thrive in the challenging, competitive, and promising century ahead.

North America's coordinated response to the initial outbreak of the H1N1 flu virus has proven to be a global example of cooperation. We set an example of a joint, responsible, and transparent response, enabling other regions to react quickly to protect their populations. Through planning and foresight, we were quickly able to put effective health measures in place. We will remain vigilant and commit ourselves to continued and deepened cooperation. We will work together to learn from recent experiences and prepare North America for the upcoming influenza season, including building up our public health capacities and facilitating efficient information sharing among our countries.

Promoting recovery from the current global economic crisis is a priority for each of us. By working together, we will accelerate recovery and job creation, and build a strong base for long-term prosperity. We look forward to the coming G20 Summit in Pittsburgh and will join efforts to ensure that the G20 continues to advance effective global responses to the crisis, including working to strengthen international financial institutions that are vital to assisting countries to restore economic vibrancy. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) plays a crucial role in mitigating the effects of the crisis in the Americas, particularly for the most vulnerable citizens of our

Hemisphere. We support an accelerated review of the IDB to ensure it has sufficient short-term lending capacity.

Our integrated economies are an engine of growth. We are investing in border infrastructure, including advanced technology, to create truly modern borders to facilitate trade and the smooth operation of supply chains, while protecting our security. Building on these investments, we will work together to strengthen the resilience of our critical infrastructure, which transcends borders and sustains the well being of our communities and economies. We will cooperate in the protection of intellectual property rights to facilitate the development of innovative economies. We commend the progress achieved on reducing unnecessary regulatory differences and have instructed our respective Ministers to continue this work by building on the previous efforts, developing focused priorities and a specific timeline.

North American trade is a vital component of our economic well being and we pledge to abide by our international responsibilities and avoid protectionist measures. We reiterate our commitment to reinvigorate our trading relationship and to ensure that the benefits of our economic relationship are widely shared and sustainable. We will seek to promote respect for labour rights and protection of the environment with a continuing dialogue to address the functioning of the Labor and Environmental side agreements. This dialogue must result in mutually agreeable and cooperative activities with the aim to enhance the well-being and prosperity of our citizens and the economic recovery of our countries.

We recognize climate change as one of the most daunting and pressing challenges of our time and a solution requires ambitious and coordinated efforts by all nations. Building on our respective national efforts, we will show leadership by working swiftly and responsibly to combat climate change as a region and to achieve a successful outcome at the 15th Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. We also recognize that the competitiveness of our region and our sustainable growth requires a greater reliance on clean energy technologies and secure and reliable energy supplies across North America. Today, in agreeing to the "North American Leaders' Declaration on Climate Change and Clean Energy", we reaffirm our political commitment to work collaboratively to combat climate change.

Transnational criminal networks threaten all three of our countries. To dismantle them and to make our populations more secure, we will continue to deepen cooperation built upon the principles of shared responsibility, the strengthening of national institutions, and respect for our respective national legal frameworks. Canada and the United States recognize the commitment and the sacrifices of the Mexican people and Government as they confront the cartels threatening society, and we pledge to them our continued support. Our three governments recognize that we cannot limit our efforts to North America alone, and we have agreed to instruct our respective Ministers to strive for greater cooperation and coordination as we work to promote security and institutional development with our neighbors in Central America and the Caribbean.

We are deeply committed to helping strengthen democratic institutions and the rule of law throughout the Americas. We support a leading role for the Organization of American States (OAS) as we work together to strengthen implementation of the Inter-American Democratic Charter. We have thoroughly discussed the coup in Honduras and reaffirm our support for the San Jose Accord and the ongoing OAS effort to seek a peaceful resolution of the political crisis—a resolution which restores democratic governance and the rule of law and respects the rights of all Hondurans.

We recognize and embrace citizen participation as an integral part of our work together in North America. We welcome the contributions of businesses, both large and small, and those of civil society groups, non-governmental organizations, academics, experts, and others. We have asked our Ministers to engage in such consultations as they work to realize the goals we have set for ourselves here in Guadalajara.

President Calderon and President Obama welcome Prime Minister Harper's offer to host the next North American Leaders' Summit in 2010. We will continue to work through this

North American Leaders' Summit process, in an inclusive and transparent manner, for the common benefit of the people of Mexico, Canada, and the United States.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama, President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico, and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada on Climate Change and Clean Energy

August 10, 2009

We, the leaders of North American reaffirm the urgency and necessity of taking aggressive action on climate change. We stress that the experience developed during the last 15 years in the North American region on environmental cooperation, sustainable development, and clean energy research, development, and deployment constitutes a valuable platform for climate change action, and we resolve to make use of the opportunities offered by existing bilateral and trilateral institutions.

We recognize the broad scientific view that the increase in global average temperature above pre-industrial levels ought not to exceed 2 degrees C, we support a global goal of reducing global emissions by at least 50% compared to 1990 or more recent years by 2050, with developed countries reducing emissions by at least 80% compared to 1990 or more recent years by 2050.

We share a vision for a low-carbon North America, which we believe will strengthen the political momentum behind a successful outcome at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC meeting this December, and support our national and global efforts to combat climate change. To achieve our low-carbon development goals, and consistent with our respective circumstances and capacities, we agree to the following:

- We will work together as we set and implement our own ambitious mid-term and long-term goals to reduce national and North American emissions;
- We will work together to develop our respective low-carbon growth plans;
- We underscore the importance of developing and strengthening financial instruments to support mitigation and adaptation actions and welcome in this regard the proposal by Mexico of a Green Fund. We will conduct further work on the proposal and will consider other views presented for scaling-up financing from both public and private sources;
- We will cooperate and exchange experiences in climate change adaptation in order to better integrate adaptation into national, sub-national, and sectoral planning to reduce vulnerabilities to climate change;
- We will develop comparable approaches to measuring, reporting, and verifying emissions reductions, including cooperating in implementing facility-level greenhouse gas reporting throughout the region;
- We will build capacity and infrastructure with a view to facilitate future cooperation in emissions trading systems, building on our current respective work in this area; and
- We will collaborate on climate friendly and low-carbon technologies, including building a smart grid in North America for more efficient and reliable electricity inter-connections, as well as regional cooperation on carbon capture and storage.
- Working in key sectors can help accomplish our emission reduction goals. With this in mind, we will:
  - Work together under the Montreal Protocol to phase down the use of HFCs and bring about significant

reductions of this potent greenhouse gas;

- Cooperate in sustainably managing our landscapes for GHG benefits, including protecting and enhancing our forests, wetlands, croplands and other carbon sinks, as well as developing appropriate methodologies to quantify, manage and implement programs for emission reductions in this sector;
- Reduce transportation emissions, including by striving to achieve carbon-neutral growth in the North American aviation sector in the context of global action;
- Pursue a framework to align energy efficiency standards in the three countries in support of improved national energy efficiency and environmental objectives; and
- Work to reduce GHG emissions in the oil and gas sector, and promote best practices in reducing fugitive emissions and the venting and flaring of natural gas.

In order to facilitate these actions, we will work cooperatively to develop and follow up on a Trilateral Working Plan and submit a report of results at our next North American Leaders Summit in 2010.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama, President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico, and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada on the Global Influenza Outbreak

August 10, 2009

Building on the strong record of our trilateral cooperation during the spring of this year, we will remain vigilant and pledge to continue our close collaboration in addressing the H1N1 pandemic. We agree to work together to ensure that we have effective strategies, grounded in the best available science.

Our governments have worked closely together since the very beginning of this outbreak to protect the health of our citizens. During the onset of the H1N1 outbreak, we worked to implement science and evidence-based measures in our countries and on our borders. These measures were geared to provide an appropriate public health response. Movement across our shared borders is essential to the economic health of our countries. We recognize that highly restrictive measures such as general border closures would be unlikely to prevent the spread of this virus and could aggravate the economic and social consequences of an influenza pandemic.

We continue to study the severity and progression of the virus both here and in other parts of the world to help inform future public health decisions, including the use of vaccine, antiviral, and non-pharmaceutical interventions. Through regular communications; exchange of scientific knowledge, expert personnel, and clinical data; and shared access to laboratory facilities, we have been working to promote the health of the people of our three nations.

In anticipation of a possible fall wave of flu due to the 2009 H1N1 virus, we will look to enhance our exchange of information, ensure common understanding on the effectiveness of public health measures, and share expertise through technical assistance and capacity building. We will continue to do everything we can to ensure that our people have timely and accurate information, and that our citizens are as prepared as they can be. In this regard, we will focus our attention on mitigating the effects of the outbreak in our communities. We encourage all families in North America to learn more about the simple steps they can take to prevent the spread of the flu, including frequent hand washing with soap and water, coughing into your sleeve, and staying home when sick to help prevent illness and the spread of the virus to others.

We know that cooperation and communication between nations, governments, citizens, and domestic and international organizations are the most effective ways to ensure that we are all protected. The strong collaboration between our countries allowed us to have a more secure North America region. We are proud that our countries have collaborated so effectively to this point, and we are firmly committed to continuing to work together in the months ahead. We will continue to work collaboratively with the World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization and support their leadership in facilitating international and regional collaboration in addressing this global issue.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Portsmouth, New Hampshire
August 11, 2009

The President. Hello, Portsmouth. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you, everybody. Everybody have a seat. Thank you. Oh, thank you so——

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back. Thank you. [*Laughter*] It is great to be back in Portsmouth. It is great to be back in New Hampshire. I have to say, though, that most of my memories of this State are cold. [*Laughter*] So it's good to be here in August.

There are a couple of people that I want to acknowledge who are here today, some special guests. First of all, I want to thank Principal Jeffrey Collins and the Portsmouth students and faculty and staff; thank you, our host for today. Your own outstanding Governor, John Lynch, is here, and his wonderful wife, Susan—Dr. Susan Lynch, is here—the first lady of New Hampshire. Your United States Senator, doing a great job, Jeanne Shaheen, is here. The Governor of the great State of Maine, and we are glad he's here in New Hampshire today, John Baldacci, is here.

Two of my favorite people, they are just taking Congress by storm, outstanding work—Paul Hodes, Carol Shea-Porter—give them a big round of applause. And we've got your own mayor, Tom Ferrini is here. Where's Tom? Where is he? There he is.

Now, I want to thank more than anybody, Lori, for that introduction and for sharing her story with the rest of us. Thank you, Lori. Lori's story is the same kind of story that I've read in letters, that I've heard in town hall meetings just like this one for the past 5 years. In fact, some of you were in that town hall—those town hall meetings, as I was traveling all throughout New Hampshire. It's the story of hard-working Americans who are held hostage by health insurance companies that deny them coverage or drop their coverage or charge fees that they can't afford for care that they desperately need. I believe it is wrong. It is bankrupting families and businesses, and that's why we are going to pass health insurance reform in 2009.

Now, this is obviously a tough time for families here in New Hampshire and all across America. Six months ago, we were in the middle of the worst recession of our lifetimes. I want you to remember what things were like in January and February. We were losing about 700,000 jobs per month, and economists of all stripes feared a second-coming of the Great Depression. That was only 6 months ago.

And that's why we acted as fast as we could to pass a Recovery Act that would stop the freefall. And I want to make sure everybody understands what we did. One-third of the money in the Recovery Act went to tax cuts that have already started showing up in the paychecks of about 500,000 working families in New Hampshire—500,000 families in New Hampshire. We also cut taxes for small businesses on the investments that they make, and over 300 New Hampshire small businesses

have qualified for new loans backed by the Recovery Act.

Now, that was a third of the Recovery Act. Another third of the money in the Recovery Act is for emergency relief for folks who've borne the brunt of this recession. So we've extended unemployment benefits for 20,000 New Hampshire residents; we've made health insurance 65 percent cheaper for families who rely on COBRA while they're looking for work; and for States that were facing historic budget shortfalls, we provided assistance that has saved the jobs of tens of thousands of workers who provided essential services, like teachers and police officers. So it's prevented a lot of painful cuts in the State, but also a lot of painful State and local tax increases.

Now, the last third of the Recovery Act is for investments that are already putting people back to work. And these are jobs refurbishing bridges and pavement on I–95, or jobs at the community health centers here in Portsmouth that will be able to add nurses and extend hours and serve up to 500 new patients. These are good jobs doing the work America needs done. And, by the way, most of the work is being done by private, local businesses, because that's how we're going to grow this economy again. So there is no doubt that the Recovery Act has helped put the brakes on this recession. We just saw last Friday the job picture is beginning to turn. We're starting to see signs that business investment is coming back.

But, New Hampshire, that doesn't mean we're out of the woods, and you know that. It doesn't mean we can just sit back and do nothing while so many families are still struggling. Because even before this recession hit, we had an economy that was working pretty well for the wealthiest Americans; it was working pretty well for Wall Street bankers; it was working pretty well for big corporations, but it wasn't working so well for everybody else. It was an economy of bubbles and busts, and we can't go back to that kind of economy.

If we want this country to succeed in the 21st century and if we want our children to succeed in the 21st century, then we're going to have to take the steps necessary to lay a new foundation for economic growth. We need to build an economy that works for everybody, and not just some people.

Now, health insurance reform is one of those pillars that we need to build up that new foundation. I don't have to explain to you that nearly 46 million Americans don't have health insurance coverage today. In the wealthiest nation on Earth, 46 million of our fellow citizens have no coverage; they are just vulnerable. If something happens, they go bankrupt, or they don't get the care they need.

But it's just as important that we accomplish health insurance reform for the Americans who do have health insurance, because right now we have a health care system that too often works better for the insurance industry than it does for the American people. And we've got to change that.

Now, let me just start by setting the record straight on a few things I've been hearing out here—[*laughter*]—about reform. Under the reform we're proposing, if you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. If you like your health care plan, you can keep your health care plan. You will not be waiting in any lines. This is not about putting the government in charge of your health insurance. I don't believe anyone should be in charge of your health insurance decisions but you and your doctor. I don't think government bureaucrats should be meddling, but I also don't think insurance company bureaucrats should be meddling. That's the health care system I believe in.

Now, we just heard from Lori about how she can't find an insurance company that will cover her because of her medical condition. She's not alone. A recent report actually shows that in the past 3 years, over 12 million Americans were discriminated against by insurance companies because of a preexisting condition. Either the insurance company refused to cover the person, or they dropped their coverage when they got sick and they needed it most, or they refused to cover a specific illness or condition, or they charged higher premiums and out-of-pocket costs. No one holds these companies accountable for these practices.

And I have to say, this is personal for Lori, but it's also personal for me. I talked about this when I was campaigning up here in New

Hampshire. I will never forget my own mother, as she fought cancer in her final months, having to worry about whether her insurance would refuse to pay for her treatment. And by the way, this was because the insurance company was arguing that somehow she should have known that she had cancer when she took her new job, even though it hadn't been diagnosed yet. So if it could happen to her, it could happen to any one of us.

And I've heard from so many Americans who have the same worries. One woman testified that an insurance company would not cover her internal organs because of an accident she had when she was 5-years-old. Think about that. That covers a lot of stuff. [*Laughter*] They're only going to cover your skin. [*Laughter*] Dermatology, that's covered, nothing else. [*Laughter*]

Another lost his coverage in the middle of chemotherapy because the insurance company discovered he had gall stones that he hadn't known about when he applied for insurance. Now, that is wrong, and that will change when we pass health care reform. That is going to be a priority.

Under the reform we're proposing, insurance companies will be prohibited from denying coverage because of a person's medical history, period. They will not be able to drop your coverage if you get sick. They will not be able to water down your coverage when you need it. Your health insurance should be there for you when it counts, not just when you're paying premiums, but when you actually get sick. And it will be when we pass this plan.

Now, when we pass health insurance reform, insurance companies will no longer be able to place some arbitrary cap on the amount of coverage you can receive in a given year or a lifetime. And we will place a limit on how much you can be charged for out-of-pocket expenses, because no one in America should go broke because they get sick.

And finally—this is important—we will require insurance companies to cover routine checkups and preventive care, like mammograms and colonoscopies, because there's no reason we shouldn't be catching diseases like breast cancer and prostate cancer on the front end. That makes sense; it saves lives; it also saves money, and we need to save money in this health care system.

So this is what reform is about. For all the chatter and the yelling and the shouting and the noise, what you need to know is this: If you don't have health insurance, you will finally have quality, affordable options once we pass reform. If you do have health insurance, we will make sure that no insurance company or government bureaucrat gets between you and the care that you need. And we will do this without adding to our deficit over the next decade, largely by cutting out the waste and insurance company giveaways in Medicare that aren't making any of our seniors healthier.

Audience member. Good.

The President. Right. [*Laughter*]

Now, before I start taking questions, let me just say, there's been a long and vigorous debate about this, and that's how it should be. That's what America is about, is we have a vigorous debate. That's why we have a democracy. But I do hope that we will talk with each other and not over each other, because one of the objectives of democracy and debate is, is that we start refining our own views because maybe other people have different perspectives, things we didn't think of.

Where we do disagree, let's disagree over things that are real, not these wild misrepresentations that bear no resemblance to anything that's actually been proposed. Because the way politics works sometimes is that people who want to keep things the way they are will try to scare the heck out of folks, and they'll create bogeymen out there that just aren't real.

So this is an important and complicated issue that deserves serious debate. And we have months to go before we're done and years after that to phase in all these reforms and get them right. And I know this: Despite all the hand-wringing pundits and the best efforts of those who are profiting from the status quo, we are closer to achieving health insurance reform than we have ever been.

We have the American Nurses Association supporting it. We have the American Medical Association on board. America's doctors and

nurses know firsthand how badly we need reform. We have broad agreement in Congress on about 80 percent of what we're trying to do. We have an agreement from the drug companies to make prescription drugs more affordable for seniors. We can cut the doughnut hole in half if we pass reform. We have the AARP on board because they know this is a good deal for our seniors.

But let's face it, now is the hard part, because the history is clear: Every time we come close to passing health insurance reform, the special interests fight back with everything they've got. They use their influence. They use their political allies to scare and mislead the American people. They start running ads. This is what they always do.

We can't let them do it again, not this time, not now. Because for all the scare tactics out there, what is truly scary, what is truly risky, is if we do nothing. If we let this moment pass, if we keep the system the way it is right now, we will continue to see 14,000 Americans lose their health insurance every day. Your premiums will continue to skyrocket. They have gone up three times faster than your wages, and they will keep on going up.

Our deficit will continue to grow because Medicare and Medicaid are on an unsustainable path. Medicare is slated to go into the red in about 8 to 10 years. I don't know if people are aware of that. If I was a senior citizen, the thing I'd be worried about right now is Medicare starts running out of money because we haven't done anything to make sure that we're getting a good bang for our buck when it comes to health care. And insurance companies will continue to profit by discriminating against people for the simple crime of being sick. Now, that's not a future I want for my children. It's not a future that I want for the United States of America.

New Hampshire, I was up here campaigning a long time. [*Laughter*] A lot of you guys came to my town hall events. Some of you voted for me; some of you didn't. But here's one thing I've got to say: I never said this was going to be easy. I never said change would be easy. If it were easy, it would have already been done. Change is hard, and it doesn't start in Washington. It begins in places like Portsmouth, with people like Lori, who have the courage to share their stories and fight for something better.

That's what we need to do right now, and I need your help. If you want a health care system that works for the American people as well as it works for the insurance companies, I need your help knocking on doors, talking to your neighbors, spread the facts. Let's get this done. [*Applause*] Thank you. Thank you.

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. Thank you. I remember that.

Everybody have a seat. All right, this is the fun part. [*Laughter*] Now, first of all, by the way, let's thank the band. I didn't see the band over here. Thank you, band, great job.

All right, here's how we're going to do this. We do a lot of town hall meetings in New Hampshire, so everybody knows the basic outlines of this thing. If you have a question, just raise your hand. There are people with microphones in the audience. I am going to try to go girl, boy, girl, boy to make sure it's fair. [*Laughter*] If I hear only from people who agree with me, I'm going to actively ask some folks who are concerned about health care, give them a chance to ask their questions, because I think we've got to make sure that we get out—surface some of the debates and concerns that people have. Some of them are legitimate. I'm going to try to get through as many questions as I can. But if you can keep your question or comment relatively brief, then I will try to keep my answers relatively brief. [*Laughter*] Okay?

All right, so we're just going to go around the room, and I'm going to start with this gentleman right here, this gentleman right here. Please introduce yourself, if you don't mind.

Medicare/Health Care Plan Options/Bipartisan Cooperation on Health Care Reform

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Welcome to Portsmouth and New Hampshire. My name is Peter Schmidt. I'm a State representative from Dover. I'm a senior citizen. I have a wonderful government-run health care plan called Medicare. I like it. It's affordable; it's reasonable; nobody tells me what I need to do. I just go to my doctor or the hospital, and I get care.

Now, one of the things you've been doing in your campaign to change the situation is you've been striving for bipartisanship. I think it's a wonderful idea, but my question is, if the Republicans actively refuse to participate in a reasonable way with reasonable proposals, isn't it time to just say we're going to pass what the American people need and what they want without the Republicans?

The President. Well, let me make a couple of points. First of all, you make a point about Medicare that's very important. I've been getting a lot of letters, pro and con, for health care reform, and one of the letters I received recently, a woman was very exercised about what she had heard about my plan. She says, "I don't want government-run health care. I don't want you meddling in the private marketplace. And keep your hands off my Medicare." [*Laughter*] True story.

And so I do think it's important for particularly seniors who currently receive Medicare to understand that if we're able to get something right like Medicare, then there should be a little more confidence that maybe the government can have a role, not the dominant role, but a role, in making sure the people are treated fairly when it comes to insurance.

Under our proposal, the majority of Americans will still be getting their health care from private insurers. All we want to do is just make sure that private insurers are treating you fairly so that you are not buying something where, if you failed to read the fine print, next thing you know, when you actually get sick, you have no coverage.

We also want to make sure that everybody has some options. So there's been talk about this public option. This is where a lot of the idea of government takeover of health care comes from. All we want to do is set up a set of options so that if you don't have health insurance or you're underinsured, you can have the same deal that Members of Congress have, which is, they can look at a menu of options. We're calling it an exchange, but it's basically just a menu of different health care plans, and you will be able to select the one that suits your family best.

And I do think that having a public option as part of that would keep the insurance companies honest, because if they've got a public plan out there that they've got to compete against, as long as it's not being subsidized by taxpayers, then that will give you some sense of what—sort of a good bargain for—basic health care would be.

Now, I think that there are some of my Republican friends on Capitol Hill who are sincerely trying to figure out if they can find a health care bill that works. Chuck Grassley of Iowa, Mike Enzi of Wyoming, Olympia Snowe from Maine have been—[*applause*]—yes, I got to admit, I like Olympia too—[*laughter*]—they are diligently working to see if they can come up with a plan that could get both Republican and Democratic support.

But I have to tell you, when I listen to folks like Lori and families all across America who are just getting pounded by the current health care system, and when I look at the Federal budget and realize that if we don't control costs on health care, there is no way for us to close the budget deficit—it will just keep on skyrocketing—when I look at those two things, I say we have to get it done. And my hope is we can do it in a bipartisan fashion, but the most important thing is getting it done for the American people.

All right. Let's—this young lady right here. All right, this young lady right here. She's still enjoying her summer. When do you go back to school?

End-of-Life Care/Inefficiencies in the Health Care System

Q. I go back to school September third.

The President. September third, okay. What's your name?

Q. Julia Hall from Malden, Massachusetts.

The President. Nice to meet you, Julia.

Q. I saw—as I was walking in, I saw a lot of signs outside saying mean things about reforming health care. How do kids know what is true, and why do people want a new system that can help—that help more of us?

The President. Well, the—I've seen some of those signs. [*Laughter*] Let me just be specific about some things that I've been hearing lately

that we just need to dispose of here. The rumor that's been circulating a lot lately is this idea that somehow the House of Representatives voted for "death panels" that will basically pull the plug on grandma because we've decided that we don't—it's too expensive to let her live anymore. [*Laughter*] And there are various—there are some variations on this theme.

It turns out that, I guess, this arose out of a provision in one of the House bills that allowed Medicare to reimburse people for consultations about end-of-life care, setting up living wills, the availability of hospice, et cetera. So the intention of the Members of Congress was to give people more information so that they could handle issues of end-of-life care when they're ready, on their own terms. It wasn't forcing anybody to do anything. This is, I guess, where the rumor came from.

The irony is that actually one of the chief sponsors of this bill originally was a Republican—then House Member, now Senator, named Johnny Isakson from Georgia—who very sensibly thought this is something that would expand people's options. And somehow it's gotten spun into this idea of "death panels." I am not in favor of that. [*Laughter*] So just—I want to clear the air here.

Now, in fairness, the underlying argument, I think, has to be addressed, and that is people's concern that if we are reforming the health care system to make it more efficient, which I think we have to do, the concern is that somehow that will mean rationing of care, all right; that somehow some government bureaucrat out there will be saying, well, you can't have this test, or you can't have this procedure, because some bean counter decides that this is not a good way to use our health care dollars. And this is a legitimate concern, so I just want to address this.

We do think that systems like Medicare are very inefficient right now, but it has nothing to do at the moment with issues of benefits. The inefficiencies all come from things like paying $177 billion to insurance companies in subsidies for something called Medicare Advantage that is not competitively bid, so insurance companies basically get a—$177 billion of taxpayer money to provide services that Medicare already provides. And it's no better—it doesn't result in better health care for seniors; it is a giveaway of $177 billion.

Now, think about what we could do with $177 billion over 10 years. I don't think that's a good use of money. I would rather spend that money on making sure that Lori can have coverage, making sure that people who don't have health insurance get some subsidies, than I would want to be subsidizing insurance companies.

So the—another way of putting this is, right now insurance companies are rationing care. They are basically telling you what's covered and what's not. They're telling you, "We'll cover this drug, but we won't cover that drug. You can have this procedure, or you can't have that procedure." So why is it that people would prefer having insurance companies make those decisions, rather than medical experts and doctors figuring out what are good deals for care and providing that information to you as a consumer and your doctor so you can make the decisions?

So I just want to be very clear about this. I recognize there is an underlying fear here that people somehow won't get the care they need. You will have not only the care you need, but also the care that, right now, is being denied to you—only if we get health care reform. That's what we're fighting for.

All right. Gentleman back here in the—with the baseball cap. Right there.

Prescription Drug Benefits

Q. Good morning—good afternoon, Mr. President—Bill Anderson from—[*inaudible*]—New Hampshire. In reference to what you just said, I'm presently under the New Hampshire Medicaid system, and I have to take a drug called Lipitor. When I got onto this program, they said, "No, we're not going to cover Lipitor," even though I'd been on that pill for probably 10 years, based on the information my doctor feel is right for me. And I had to go through two different trial of other kinds of drugs before it was finally deemed that I was able to go back on the Lipitor through the New Hampshire Medicaid system. So here it is, the Medicaid that you guys are administering, and you're telling me that it's good, but in essence, I'm dealing with the same thing that you're

telling me the insurance companies are doing. Thank you.

The President. Well, look, I think that's a legitimate point. I don't know all the details, but it sounds to me like they were probably trying to have you take a generic as opposed to a brand name. Is that right?

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. And it turned out that you did not have as good of a reaction under the generic as the brand name, and then they put you back on the brand name. Is that what happened?

Q. Correct, to save money.

The President. Well—right. Look, there may be—in 9 out of 10 cases, the generic might work as well or better than the brand name. And we don't want to just subsidize the drug companies if you've got one that works just as well as another.

The important thing about the story that you just told me was—is that once it was determined that, in fact, you needed the brand name, you were able to get the brand name. Now, I want to be absolutely clear here. There are going to be instances where if there is really strong scientific evidence that the generic and the brand name work just as well, and the brand name costs twice as much, that the taxpayer should try to get the best deal possible, as long as if it turns out that the generic doesn't work as well, you're able to get the brand name.

So the basic principle that we want to set up here is that—if you're in private insurance—first of all, your private insurance can do whatever you want. If you're under a government program, then it makes sense for us to make sure that we're getting the best deal possible and not just giving drug makers or insurers more money than they should be getting. But ultimately, you've got to be able to get the best care based on what the doctor says.

And it sounds like that is eventually what happened. It may be that it wasn't as efficient, it wasn't as smooth as it should have been, but that result is actually a good one. And you think about all the situations where a generic actually would have worked. In fact, one of the things I want to do is to speed up generics getting introduced to the marketplace, because right now drug companies are fighting so that they can keep, essentially, their patents on their brand-name drugs a lot longer. And if we can make those patents a little bit shorter, generics get on the market sooner, ultimately, you as consumers will save money. All right? But it was an excellent question, so thank you.

All right, it's a young woman's turn—or a lady's turn. Right here. Yes, you.

Medicare

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. I'm Jackie Millet, and I'm from Wells, Maine. And my question is, I am on—presently on Medicare, and I do have a supplement, but if something happens to my husband, I lose the supplement. And what will happen? I take a lot of medications; I need a lot—I've had a lot of procedures. And how will Medicare under the new proposal help people who are going to need things like this?

The President. Well, first of all, another myth that we've been hearing about is this notion that somehow we're going to be cutting your Medicare benefits. We are not. The AARP would not be endorsing a bill if it was undermining Medicare. Okay? So I just want seniors to be clear about this, because if you look at the polling, it turns out seniors are the ones who are most worried about health care reform. And that's understandable, because they use a lot of care. They've got Medicare, and it's already hard for a lot of people, even on Medicare, because of the supplements and all the other costs out of pocket that they're still paying.

So I just want to assure we're not talking about cutting Medicare benefits. We are talking about making Medicare more efficient, eliminating the insurance subsidies, working with hospitals so that they are changing some of the reimbursement practices.

Right now hospitals, they are not penalized if there are constant readmission rates from patients that have gone through the hospital. If you go to a car company or a auto shop and you say, "Can I have my car repaired," you get your car repaired. If 2 weeks later it's broken

down again, if you take it back, hopefully, they're not going to charge you again for repairing the car. You want them to do it right the first time. And too often we're not seeing the best practices in some of these hospitals to prevent people from being readmitted. That costs a lot of money. So those are the kinds of changes we're talking about.

Now, in terms of savings for you as a Medicare recipient, the biggest one is on prescription drugs, because the prescription drug companies have already said that they would be willing to put up $80 billion in rebates for prescription drugs as part of a health care reform package.

Now, we may be able to get even more than that. But think about it. When the prescription drug plan was passed—Medicare Part D—they decided they weren't going to negotiate with the drug companies for the cheapest available price on drugs. And as a consequence, seniors are way overpaying; there's that big doughnut hole that forces them to go out of pocket. You say you take a lot of medications; that means that doughnut hole is always something that's looming out there for you. If we can cut that doughnut hole in half, that's money directly out of your pocket. And that's one of the reasons that AARP is so supportive, because they see this as a way of potentially saving seniors a lot of money on prescription drugs. Okay?

All right. The gentleman right here in the white shirt.

Health Insurance Plan Options

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. My name is Ben Hershinson. I'm from Ogunquit, Maine, and also Bonita Springs, Florida. And I'm a Republican; I don't know what I'm doing here, but I'm here. [*Laughter*]

The President. We're happy to have you. We're happy to have you.

Q. Mr. President, you've been quoted over the years—when you were a Senator and perhaps even before then—that you were essentially a supporter of a universal plan. I'm beginning to see that you're changing that. Do you honestly believe that? Because that is my concern. I'm on Medicare, but I still worry that if we go to a public option, period, that the private companies, the insurance companies, rather than competing—because who can compete with the Government? The answer is nobody. So my question is, do you still—as yourself, now—support a universal plan? Or are you open to the private industry still being maintained?

The President. Well, I think it's an excellent question, so I appreciate the chance to respond. First of all, I want to make a distinction between a universal plan versus a single-payer plan, because those are two different things.

A single-payer plan would be a plan like Medicare for all, or the kind of plan that they have in Canada, where basically government is the only person—is the only entity that pays for all health care. Everybody has a government-paid-for plan, even though in—depending on which country, the doctors are still private or the hospitals might still be private. In some countries, the doctors work for the government and the hospitals are owned by the government. But the point is, is that government pays for everything, like Medicare for all. That is a single-payer plan.

I have not said that I was a single-payer supporter, because, frankly, we historically have had a employer-based system in this country with private insurers, and for us to transition to a system like that, I believe, would be too disruptive. So what would end up happening would be, a lot of people who currently have employer-based health care would suddenly find themselves dropped, and they would have to go into an entirely new system that we—had not been fully set up yet. And I would be concerned about the potential destructiveness of that kind of transition. All right?

So I'm not promoting a single-payer plan. I am promoting a plan that will assure that every single person is able to get health insurance at an affordable price, and that if they have health insurance, they are getting a good deal from the insurance companies. That's what I'm fighting for.

Now, the way we have approached it is that if you've got health care under a private plan, if your employer provides you health care or you buy your own health care and you're happy with it, you won't have to change.

What we're saying is, if you don't have health care, then you will be able to go to an exchange similar to the menu of options that I used to have as a Member of Congress, and I can look and see what are these various private health care plans offering, what's a good deal, and I'll be able to buy insurance from that exchange. And because it's a big pool, I'll be able to drive down costs; I'll get a better deal than if I was trying to get health insurance on my own.

This is true, by the way, for small businesses as well. A lot of small businesses, they end up paying a lot more than large businesses per person for health care, because they've got no bargaining power; they've got no leverage. So we wanted small businesses to be able to buy into this big pool. Okay?

Now, the only thing that I have said is that having a public option in that menu would provide competition for insurance companies to keep them honest. Now, I recognize, though, you make a legitimate—you raise a legitimate concern. People say, well, how can a private company compete against the government? And my answer is that if the private insurance companies are providing a good bargain, and if the public option has to be self-sustaining, meaning taxpayers aren't subsidizing it, but it has to run on charging premiums and providing good services and a good network of doctors, just like any other private insurer would do, then I think private insurers should be able to compete. They do it all the time.

I mean, if you think about it, UPS and FedEx are doing just fine. Right? No, they are. I mean, it's the Post Office that's always having problems. [*Laughter*] So right now you've got private insurers who are out there competing effectively, even though a lot of people get their care through Medicare or Medicaid or VA. So there's nothing inevitable about this somehow destroying the private marketplace, as long as—and this is a legitimate point that you're raising—that it's not set up where the government is basically being subsidized by the taxpayers, so that even if they're not providing a good deal, we keep on having to pony out more and more money. And I've already said that can't be the way the public option is set up. It has to be self-sustaining.

Does that answer your question?

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Okay, thank you.

All right, right there. Go ahead.

Mental Health Care

Q. Thank you. Hello, Mr. President. My name is Lynda Bettcher. I'm from Portsmouth, and I have proudly taught at this high school for 37 years.

The President. Well, congratulations.

Q. Thank you.

The President. What do you teach?

Q. I teach English and journalism.

The President. Excellent.

Q. Yes, thank you.

The President. Good.

Q. And in those 37 years, I've been lucky enough to have very good health care coverage, and my concerns currently are for those who do not. And I guess my question is, if every American who needed it had access to good mental health care, what do you think the impact would be on our society?

The President. Well, you raise the—you know, mental health has always been undervalued in the health insurance market. And what we now know is, is that somebody who has severe depression has a more debilitating and dangerous illness than somebody who's got a broken leg. But a broken leg, nobody argues that's covered. Severe depression, unfortunately, oftentimes isn't even under existing insurance policies.

So I think—I've been a strong believer in mental health parity, recognizing that those are serious illnesses. And I would like to see a mental health component as part of a package that people are covered under, under our plan. Okay?

All right. This gentleman right here. He's coming with the mike.

Paying for Health Care Reform

Q. Hello, Mr. President. I'm Justin Higgins from Stratham, New Hampshire.

The President. How are you, Justin?

Q. Fine, thank you. There's a lot of misinformation about how we're going to pay for this health care plan. And I'm wondering how we're going to do this without raising the taxes on the middle class, because I don't want the burden to fall on my parents. And also, I'm a college student so——

The President. They've already got enough problems paying your college tuition. [*Laughter*]

Q. Exactly. Exactly.

The President. All right, I hear you.

Q. Also, I'm looking towards my future with career options and opportunities, and I don't want inflation to skyrocket by just adding this to the national debt. So I'm wondering how we can avoid both of those scenarios.

The President. Right, it's a great question. First of all, I said I won't sign a bill that adds to the deficit or the national debt. Okay? So this will have to be paid for. That, by the way, is in contrast to the prescription drug bill that was passed that cost hundreds of billions of dollars—by the previous administration and previous Congress—that was not paid for at all, and that was a major contributor to our current national debt.

That's why I—you will forgive me if sometimes I chuckle a little bit when I hear all these folks saying, "Oh, big-spending Obama," when I'm proposing something that will be paid for, and they signed into law something that wasn't, and they had no problem with it. Same people, same folks, and they say with a straight face how we've got to be fiscally responsible.

Now, having said that, paying for it is not simple. I don't want to pretend that it is. By definition, if we're helping people who currently don't have health insurance, that's going to cost some money. It's been estimated to cost somewhere between, let's say, 800 billion and a trillion dollars over 10 years. Now, it's important that we're talking about over 10 years, because sometimes the number trillion gets thrown out there and everybody thinks it's a trillion dollars a year. Gosh, that—how are we going to do that? So it's about a hundred billion dollars a year to cover everybody and to implement some of the insurance reforms that we're talking about.

About two-thirds of those costs we can cover by eliminating the inefficiencies that I already mentioned. So I already talked about $177 billion worth of subsidies to the insurance companies. Let's take that money, let's put it in the kitty. There's about 500 billion to $600 billion over 10 years that can be saved without cutting benefits for people who are currently receiving Medicare, actually making the system more efficient over time.

That does still leave, though, anywhere from 300 billion to 400 billion over 10 years, or 30 to $40 billion a year. That does have to be paid for, and we will need new sources of revenue to pay for it. And I've made a proposal that would—I want to just be very clear, the proposal—my preferred approach to this would have been to take people like myself who make more than $250,000 a year and limit the itemized deductions that we can take to the same level as middle class folks can take them.

Right now the average person—the average middle class family, they're in the 28-percent tax bracket, and so they basically can itemize, take a deduction that is about 28 percent. I can take—since I'm in a much higher tax bracket, I can take a much bigger deduction. And so as a consequence, if I give a charitable gift, I get a bigger break from Uncle Sam than you do.

So what I've said is, let's just even it out. That would actually raise sufficient money. Now, that was my preferred way of paying for it. Members of Congress have had different ideas. And we are still exploring these ideas. By the time that we actually have a bill that is set, that is reconciled between House and Senate and is voted on, it will be very clear what those ideas are. My belief is, is that it should not burden people who make $250,000 a year or less.

And I think that's the commitment that I made, the pledge that I made when I was up here running in New Hampshire, folks. So I don't want anybody saying somehow that I'm pulling the bait-and-switch here. I said very specifically I thought we should roll back Bush tax cuts and use them to pay for health insurance. That's what I'm intending to do. All right?

Okay, I've only got time for a couple more questions. Somebody here who has a concern about health care that has not been raised, or is

skeptical and suspicious and wants to make sure that—[*laughter*]—because I don't want people thinking I just have a bunch of plants in here. All right, so I've got one right here, and then I'll ask the guy with two hands up because he must really be—have a burning question. [*Laughter*]

All right, go ahead.

Medicare/Expert Health Panels/Shortage of Primary Care Physicians and Nurses

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I've worked in the medical field for about 18 years and seen a lot of changes over those 18 years. I currently work here at the high school as a paraprofessional. My name's Linda Arsenault from Portsmouth, New Hampshire. I have a little, you know, couple questions about the universal insurance program, which, if I understand you correctly, President Obama, you seek to cover 50 million new people over and above the amount of people that are currently getting health care at this moment.

The President. It will probably—I just want to be honest here. There are about 46 million people who are uninsured, and under the proposals that we have, even if you have an individual mandate, probably only about 37, 38 million, so somewhere in that ballpark.

Q. Okay, I'm off a little bit. [*Laughter*]

The President. No, no, I just wanted to make sure I wasn't overselling my plan here.

Q. That's okay, Mr. President. My concern is—[*laughter*].

The President. She's okay.

Q. He winked at me. [*Laughter*] My concern is for where are we going to get the doctors and nurses to cover these? Right now I know that there's a hard—there's a really—people are not going to school to become teachers to teach the nursing staffs. Doctors are—have huge capacities; some of them are leaving private to go to administrative positions because of the caseload that they're being made to hold. I really do feel that there will be more demand with this universal health care and no added supply. I also understand that it was to be taken from Medicare, about $500 billion, and correct me if I'm wrong on that.

The President. I just said that.

Q. Okay. And also, you know, I'm very, very concerned about the elderly. I don't know if this is also correct, but I understand that a Federal health board will sit in judgment of medical procedures and protocols to impose guidelines on all providers—when to withhold certain types of care—like, what is the point you get to when we say, I'm sorry that this cannot happen. And thank you very much for letting me ask those questions, Mr. President.

The President. Of course. Well, first of all, I already mentioned that we would be taking savings out of Medicare that are currently going to insurance subsidies, for example. So that is absolutely true.

I just want to be clear, again: Seniors who are listening here, this does not affect your benefits. These—this is not money going to you to pay for your benefits; this is money that is subsidizing folks who don't need it. So that's point number one.

Point number two, in terms of these expert health panels—well, this goes to the point about "death panels;" that's what folks are calling them. The idea is actually pretty straightforward, which is, if we've got a panel of experts, health experts, doctors, who can provide guidelines to doctors and patients about what procedures work best in what situations and find ways to reduce, for example, the number of tests that people take—these aren't going to be forced on people, but they will help guide how the delivery system works so that you are getting higher quality care. And it turns out that oftentimes higher quality care actually costs less.

So let me just take the example of testing. Right now a lot of Medicare patients, you have something wrong with you, you go to your doctor, doctor checks up on you, maybe he takes—has a test—he administers a test. You go back home, you get the results; the doctor calls you and says, "Okay, now you got to go to this specialist." Then you have to take another trip to the specialist. The specialist doesn't have the first test, so he does his own test. Then maybe you've got to, when you go to the hospital, you've got to take a third test.

Now, each time taxpayers—under Medicare—are paying for that test. So for a panel of experts to say, why don't we have all the specialists and the doctors communicating after the first test, and let's have electronic medical records so that we can forward the results of that first test to the others, that's a sensible thing to do. That is a sensible thing to do.

So we want—if I'm a customer, if I'm a consumer, and I know that I'm overpaying $6,000 for anything else, I would immediately want the best deal. But for some reason, in health care, we continue to put up with getting a bad deal. We're paying $6,000 more than any other advanced country, and we're not healthier for it—$6,000 per person more, per year. That doesn't make any sense. So there's got to be a lot of waste in the system. And the idea is to have doctors, nurses, medical experts look for it.

Now, the last question that you asked is very important, and I don't have a simple solution to this. If you look at the makeup of the medical profession right now, we have constant nurses shortages, and we have severe shortages of primary care physicians. Primary care physicians, ideally family physicians, they should be the frontlines of the medical profession in encouraging prevention and wellness. But the problem is, is that primary care physicians, they make a lot less money than specialists——

Audience member. And nurse practitioners.

The President. And nurse practitioners too. [*Laughter*] So—well, and nurses, you've got a whole—another issue which you already raised, which is the fact that not only are nurses not paid as well as they should, but you also have—nursing professors are paid even worse than nurses. So as a consequence, you don't have enough professors to teach nursing, which means that's part of the reason why you've got such a shortage of nurses.

So we are going to be taking steps, as part of reform, to deal with expanding primary care physicians and our nursing corps. On the doctors' front, one of the things we can do is to reimburse doctors who are providing preventive care and not just the surgeon who provides care after somebody is sick. Nothing against surgeons; I want surgeons. I don't want to be getting a bunch of letters from surgeons now. [*Laughter*] I'm not dissing surgeons here.

All I'm saying is—let's take the example of something like diabetes, one of—a disease that's skyrocketing, partly because of obesity, partly because it's not treated as effectively as it could be. Right now if we paid a family—if a family care physician works with his or her patient to help them lose weight, modify diet, monitors whether they're taking their medications in a timely fashion, they might get reimbursed a pittance. But if that same diabetic ends up getting their foot amputated, that's $30,000, 40—$50,000 immediately the surgeon is reimbursed. Well, why not make sure that we're also reimbursing the care that prevents the amputation. Right? That will save us money.

So changing reimbursement rates will help. The other thing that will really help both nurses and doctors, helping pay for medical education for those who are willing to go into primary care. And that's something that we already started to do under the Recovery Act, and we want to do more of that under health care reform.

All right, last question, last question right here. This is a skeptic, right?

Importance of Health Care Reform

Q. I am a skeptic.

The President. Good.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, for coming to Portsmouth. My name is Michael Layon. I'm from Derry, New Hampshire, District One in the congressional district. I'm one of the people that turned myself in on the White House web page the other day for being a skeptic of this bill. I'm proud to have done so.

The President. Before you answer this question, just because you referred to it, can I just say, this is another example of how the media ends up just completely distorting what's taking place. What we've said is that if somebody has—if you get an e-mail from somebody that says, for example, "Obama-care is creating a death panel," forward us the e-mail, and we will answer the question that's raised in the e-mail. Suddenly, on some of these news outlets, this is being portrayed as "Obama collecting an enemies list." [*Laughter*]

Now, come on, guys. You know, here I am trying to be responsive to questions that are being raised out there——

Q. And appreciate it.

The President. And I just want to be clear that all we're trying to do is answer questions.

All right, go ahead.

Q. So my question is for you—and I know in the White House the stand which you're on has often been referred to as the bully pulpit. Why have you not used the bully pulpit to chastise Congress for having two systems of health care—one for all of us and one for them?

The President. Well, look, first of all, if we don't have health care reform, the gap between what Congress gets and what ordinary Americans get will continue to be as wide as it is right now. And you are absolutely right; I don't think Carol or Paul would deny they've got a pretty good deal. They've got a pretty good deal. I mean, the fact is, is that they are part—by the way, I want you to know, though, their deal is no better than the janitor who cleans their offices, because they are part of a Federal health care employee plan. It is a huge pool, so you've got millions of people who are part of the pool, which means they've got enormous leverage with the insurance companies. Right? So they can negotiate the same way that a big Fortune 500 company can negotiate, and that drives down their costs. They get a better deal.

Now, what happens is, those Members of Congress—and when I was a Senator, I—same situation—I could, at the beginning of the year, look at a menu of a variety of different health care options, most of them offer—these are all private plans, or they could be non-for-profit, Blue Cross Blue Shield or Aetna or what have you—they would have these plans that were offered, and we would then select what plan worked best for us.

But there were certain requirements; if you wanted to sell insurance to Federal employees, there were certain things you had to do. You had to cover certain illnesses. You couldn't exclude for preexisting conditions. I mean, there were a lot of rules that had been negotiated by the Federal Government for those workers.

Now, guess what? That's exactly what we want to do with health care reform. We want to make sure that you are getting that same kind of option. That's what the health exchange is all about, is that you, just like a Member of Congress, can go and choose the plan that's right for you. You don't have to. If you've got health care that you like, you don't have to use it.

So for example, for a while, Michelle, my wife, worked at University of Chicago Hospital. She really liked her coverage that she was getting through the University of Chicago Hospital, so I did not have to use the Federal employee plan. But I had that option available.

The same is true for you. Nobody is going to force you to be part of that plan. But if you look at it and you say, you know what, this is a good deal, and I've got more leverage because maybe I'm a small business, or maybe I'm self-employed, or maybe I'm like Lori and nobody will take me because of a preexisting condition, and now suddenly, I've got these rules set up—why wouldn't I want to take advantage of that?

Now, there are legitimate concerns about the cost of the program, so I understand if you just think no matter what, no matter how good the program is, you don't think that we should be paying at all for additional people to be covered, then you're probably going to be against health care reform, and I can't persuade you. There are legitimate concerns about the public option—the gentleman who raised his hand. I think it's a good idea, but I understand some people just philosophically think that if you set up a public option, that that will drive public insurance out—or private insurers out. I think that's a legitimate concern. I disagree with it, but that's a legitimate debate to have.

But I want everybody to understand, though, the status quo is not working for you. The status quo is not working for you. And if we can set up a system, which I believe we can, that gives you options, just like Members of Congress has options, that gives a little bit of help to people who currently are working hard every day but they don't have health care

insurance on the job, and most importantly, if we can make sure that you, all of you who have insurance, which is probably 80 or 90 percent of you, that you are not going to be dropped because of a preexisting condition, or because you lose your job, or because you change your job, that you're actually going to get what you pay for, that you're not going to find out when you're sick that you got cheated, that you're not going to hit a lifetime cap where you thought you were paying for insurance but after a certain amount suddenly you're paying out of pocket and bankrupting yourself and your family, if we can set up a system that gives you some security, that's worth a lot.

And this is the best chance we've ever had to do that. But we're all going to have to come together; we're going to have to make it happen. I am confident we can do so, but I'm going to need your help, New Hampshire.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. at Portsmouth High School. In his remarks, he referred to Lori Hitchcock, resident of Portsmouth, NH, who introduced the President.

Statement on the Death of Eunice Kennedy Shriver
August 11, 2009

Michelle and I were deeply saddened to learn about the passing of Eunice Kennedy Shriver. Eunice was many things to many people: a mother who inspired her children to serve others, a wife who supported her husband Sargent in the Peace Corps and in politics, and a sister to her siblings, including brothers John, Robert, and Edward. But above all, she will be remembered as the founder of the Special Olympics, as a champion for people with intellectual disabilities, and as an extraordinary woman who, as much as anyone, taught our Nation and our world that no physical or mental barrier can restrain the power of the human spirit. Her leadership greatly enriched the lives of Special Olympians throughout the world who have experienced the pride and joy of competition and achievement thanks to her vision.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Sargent, their children Robert, Maria, Timothy, Mark, and Anthony, and the entire Kennedy family.

Statement on the Detention of Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma
August 11, 2009

The conviction and sentencing of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi today on charges related to an uninvited intrusion into her home violate universal principles of human rights, run counter to Burma's commitments under the ASEAN charter, and demonstrate continued disregard for U.N. Security Council statements. I join the international community in calling for Aung San Suu Kyi's immediate unconditional release.

Today's unjust decision reminds us of the thousands of other political prisoners in Burma who, like Aung San Suu Kyi, have been denied their liberty because of their pursuit of a government that respects the will, rights, and aspirations of all Burmese citizens. They too should be freed. Suppressing ideas never succeeds in making them go away. I call on the Burmese regime to heed the views of its own people and the international community and to work towards genuine national reconciliation.

I am also concerned by the sentencing of American citizen John Yettaw to 7 years in prison, a punishment out of proportion with his actions.

NOTE: The statement referred to John Yettaw, who was arrested on May 5 by Burmese authorities for entering the home of Aung San Suu Kyi in Rangoon, Burma.

Remarks at a Reception Honoring Supreme Court Associate Justice Sonia M. Sotomayor

August 12, 2009

Good morning, everybody, and welcome to the White House. I am glad all of you could be with us today as we honor the newest member of our highest Court, who I'm proud to address, for the very first time, as Justice Sonia Sotomayor.

We are also honored to be joined by Justice Sotomayor's new colleagues. We have Justice Ginsburg who is here, as well as Justice Stevens. And so I just want to thank both Justice Stevens and Justice Ginsburg not only for being here today but for your extraordinary service on the Court. And I know you'll be giving Justice Sotomayor some good tips. [*Laughter*]

I also want to thank everyone who's worked so hard to bring us to this day. I want to thank especially our Judiciary Committee chairman, Senator Patrick Leahy, as well as our Senate majority leader, Harry Reid, for their outstanding work to complete this process before the August recess.

I want to thank Senator Schumer and Senator Gillibrand, both of whom are Justice Sotomayor's home-State Senators, for their extraordinary work on her behalf. I want to thank all the Members of Congress who've taken the time to join us here at the White House event. And I want to acknowledge all the advocates and groups who organized and mobilized and supported these efforts from the very beginning. Your work was absolutely critical to our success, and I appreciate all that you've done. So pat yourselves on the back. Congratulations.

Two Members of Congress that I just especially want to acknowledge: Senator Bob Menendez, who worked so hard on the Senate side, and Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez, who is our chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

And I think we all want to take a moment to recognize the woman who, in so many ways, truly made this day possible, Justice Sotomayor's mother, Celina Sotomayor. Mrs. Sotomayor is here with her husband, Omar, and Justice Sotomayor's brother, Juan, and other members of their family. And we're thrilled that they could join us here today. And by the way, I don't normally do this, but let me also just thank my extraordinary White House staff who helped to usher this stuff through. We're very proud of them. Thank you very much.

Of course, we're here not just to celebrate our extraordinary new Supreme Court Justice and all those who've been a part of her journey to this day; we're here as well to celebrate an extraordinary moment for our Nation. We celebrate the impact Justice Sotomayor has already had on people across America who have been inspired by her exceptional life story. We celebrate the greatness of a country in which such a story is possible. And we celebrate how, with their overwhelming vote to confirm Justice Sotomayor, the United States Senate, Republicans and Democrats, tore down yet one more barrier and affirmed our belief that in America, the doors of opportunity must be open to all.

And with that vote, the Senate looked beyond the old divisions, and they embraced excellence. They recognized Justice Sotomayor's intellect, her integrity, and her independence of mind, her respect for the proper role of each branch of Government, her fidelity to the law in each case that she hears, and her devotion to protecting our core constitutional rights and liberties.

Justice William Brennan once said that in order for government to ensure those rights for all its citizens, government officials must be attentive to the concrete human realities at stake in the decisions they make. They must understand, as Justice Brennan put it, "the pulse of life beneath the official version of events"—the pulse of life beneath the official version of events.

Justice Sotomayor understands those realities because she's witnessed them firsthand as a prosecutor, a litigator, and a judge, working to uphold our laws, keep our communities safe, and give people the chance to live out their dreams, work that she has done with

devotion, with distinction, and with an unyielding commitment to give back to this country that has given her so much. And she understands these things because she's lived these things, because her life is one of those "only in America" stories: raised by a single mom in the south Bronx determined to give her every opportunity to succeed; propelled by the talent and hard work that would earn her scholarships and honors at the best schools in the country; driven always by the belief that it doesn't matter where you come from, or what you look like, or what challenges life throws your way, no dream is beyond reach in the United States of America.

And with her extraordinary breadth and depth of experience, Justice Sotomayor brings to the Court both a mastery of the letter of the law and an understanding of how the law actually unfolds in our daily lives, its impact on how we work and worship and raise our families, on whether we have the opportunities we need to live the lives we imagine.

That understanding is vital for the work of a Supreme Court Justice, as Justice Stevens and Justice Ginsburg will testify, the work of applying principles set forth at our founding to the cases and controversies of our time. For as visionary as our Founders were, they did not presume to know exactly how the times would change, what new questions fate and history would set before us. Instead, they sought to articulate ideals that would be timeless, ideals that would accommodate the ever-changing circumstances of our lives and preserve for each new generation our most sacred rights and freedoms.

And when Justice Sotomayor put her hand on that Bible and took that oath, we took yet another step towards realizing those ideals. We came yet another step closer to the more perfect union that we all seek, because while this is Justice Sotomayor's achievement, the result of her ability and determination, this moment is not just about her. It's about every child who will grow up thinking to him or herself, "If Sonia Sotomayor can make it, then maybe I can too." It's about every mother or father who looks at the sacrifices Justice Sotomayor's mother made and the successes she and her brother have had and thinks, "I may not have much in my own life, but if I work hard enough, maybe my kids can have more." It's about everyone in this Nation facing challenges and struggles in their lives who hear Justice Sotomayor's story and thinks to themselves, "If she could overcome so much and go so far, then why can't I?"

Nearly 80 years ago, as the cornerstone was laid for the building that became our Supreme Court, Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes declared, "The Republic endures, and this is the symbol of its faith." Justice Sotomayor's rise from humble beginnings to the height of achievement is yet another symbol of that faith—faith that the American Dream still endures; faith that "equal justice under the law" is not just an inscription in marble, but an animating ideal of our democracy; faith that in this great Nation, all things are still possible for all people.

This is a great day for America, and I know that all of us here are proud and honored to have been a part of it. And so with that, I would like to introduce the newest member of the United States Supreme Court, Justice Sonia Sotomayor.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:17 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Kirsten E. Gillibrand. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Associate Justice Sotomayor.

Remarks on Presenting the Presidential Medal of Freedom
August 12, 2009

The President. Thank you. Please be seated. There are many honors and privileges bestowed on the occupant of this house, but few mean as much to me as the chance to award America's highest civilian medal to the recipients that are here today. This is a chance for me, and for the United States of America, to say thank you to some of the finest citizens of this country and of all countries.

The men and women we honor today have led very different lives and pursued very different careers. They're pioneers in science and medicine. They're gifted artists and indomitable athletes. They have made their mark in the courtroom, in the community, and in Congress. And what unites them is a belief, that most—forgive me to those of you who are not Americans—but what we consider to be that most American of beliefs—that our lives are what we make of them, that no barriers of race, gender, or physical infirmity can restrain the human spirit, and that the truest test of a person's life is what we do for one another.

The recipients of the Medal of Freedom did not set out to win this or any other award. They did not set out in pursuit of glory or fame or riches. Rather, they set out guided by passion, committed to hard work, aided by persistence, often with few advantages but the gifts, grace, and good name God gave them.

So let them stand as an example here in the United States and around the world of what we can achieve in our own lives. Let them stand as an example of the difference we can make in the lives of others. Let each of their stories stand as an example of a life well lived.

One of the last things Suzy Komen did before she passed away was ask her sister Nancy to make her a promise. Nancy promised her she would prevent other families battling breast cancer from hurting the way theirs had. What began with $200 and a list of friends has become a global Race for the Cure, a campaign that has eased the pain and saved the lives of millions around the world. In the months after her sister's death, Nancy lay awake at night, thinking about the promise she had made and wondering whether one person could really make a difference. Nancy's life is the answer.

While an intern at Miami's Jackson Memorial, Dr. Pedro Jose Greer came across a patient in a coma without a known name or address, a homeless man found by firefighters, suffering from tuberculosis. In the days that followed, the physician Little Havana knows as Dr. Joe searched for clues about the patient's life in the squalor under Miami's highways. Deciding that Miami's homeless deserved better, Dr. Greer founded Camillus Health Concern, a clinic that now offers care to over 4,000 poor and homeless patients. It's a life that might be distilled into a question Dr. Greer asks all of us: "If we don't fight injustice, who will?"

Professor Stephen Hawking was a brilliant man and a mediocre student—[*laughter*]—when he lost his balance and tumbled down a flight of stairs. Diagnosed with a rare disease and told he had just a few years to live, he chose to live with new purpose. And happily, in the four decades since, he has become one of the world's leading scientists. His work in theoretical physics, which I will not attempt to explain further here—[*laughter*]—has advanced our understanding of the universe. His popular books have advanced the cause of science itself. From his wheelchair, he's led us on a journey to the farthest and strangest reaches of the cosmos. In so doing, he has stirred our imagination and shown us the power of the human spirit here on Earth.

Now, told he was too small to play college football, Jack Kemp became a pro quarterback. Cut by four teams, he led the Buffalo Bills to two championships. Football, he once said, gave him a good sense of perspective about politics: He'd "already been booed, cheered, cut, sold, [and traded]." [*Laughter*] So makes me feel better. [*Laughter*] A conservative thinker, a Republican leader, and a defender of civil rights, he was that rare patriot who put country over party, never forgetting what he learned on the gridiron: that it takes

each of us doing our part and all of us working together to achieve a common goal. It's a life from which we can all draw lessons, Democrat and Republican alike.

After purchasing an $8 racket with money earned from chores, 11-year-old Billie Jean declared a goal to be the number-one tennis player in the world. Yet what we honor are not simply her 12 Grand Slam titles, 101 doubles titles, and 67 singles titles—pretty good, Billie Jean—[*laughter*]—we honor what she calls "all of the off-the-court stuff," what she did to broaden the reach of the game, to change how women athletes and women everywhere view themselves, and to give everyone, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, including my two daughters, a chance to compete both on the court and in life. As Billie Jean once said, we should "never, ever underestimate the human spirit." Nor should we underestimate Billie Jean King's spirit.

Born and raised in Jim Crow Alabama, preaching in his blood, the Reverend Joseph Lowery is a giant of the Moses generation of civil rights leaders. It was just King, Lowery, and a few others huddled in Montgomery who laid the groundwork for the bus boycott and the movement that was to follow. A founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Lowery was later asked to serve as president. He agreed to serve for 1 year, but wound up serving, as he puts it, for 20 1-year terms. [*Laughter*] Throughout his life, some have called him crazy. But one of my favorite sermons that I heard Dr. Lowery once deliver, he said: "There's good crazy, and there's bad crazy"—[*laughter*]—"and sometimes you need a little bit of that good crazy to make the world a better place." [*Laughter*]

Born just a generation past the Battle of the Little Big Horn, a grandson of a scout for General Custer himself, Dr. Joseph Medicine Crow was the first member of his tribe to attend college and earn a master's. Before completing his Ph.D., he left to serve in World War II. Wearing war paint beneath his uniform and a sacred feather beneath his helmet, Joseph Medicine Crow completed the four battlefield deeds that made him the last Crow war chief. Historian, educator, and patriot—a good man, a *bacheitche* in Crow—Dr. Medicine Crow's life reflects not only the warrior spirit of the Crow people, but America's highest ideals.

His name was Harvey Milk, and he was here to recruit us—all of us—to join a movement and change a nation. For much of his early life, he had silenced himself. In the prime of his life, he was silenced by the act of another. But in the brief time in which he spoke and ran and led his voice stirred the aspirations of millions of people. He would become, after several attempts, one of the first openly gay Americans elected to public office. And his message of hope—hope unashamed, hope unafraid—could not ever be silenced. It was Harvey who said it best: "You gotta give 'em hope."

When a young Sandra Day graduated from Stanford Law School near the top of her class in 2 years instead of the usual 3, she would—she was offered just one job in the private sector. Her prospective employer asked her how well she typed and told her there might be work for her as a legal secretary. Now, I cannot know how she would have fared as a legal secretary—[*laughter*]—but she made a mighty fine Justice of the United States Supreme Court. [*Laughter*] A judge and Arizona legislator, cancer survivor, child of the Texas plains, Sandra Day O'Connor is like the pilgrim in the poem she sometime quotes who has forged a new trail and built a bridge behind her for all young women to follow.

It's been said that Sidney Poitier does not make movies, he makes milestones: milestones of artistic excellence, milestones of America's progress. On screen and behind the camera, in films such as "The Defiant Ones," "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner," "Uptown Saturday Night," "Lilies of the Field"—for which he became the first African American to win an Academy Award for Best Actor—Poitier not only entertained but enlightened, shifting attitudes, broadening hearts, revealing the power of the silver screen to bring us closer together. The child of a Bahamian tomato farmers, Poitier once called his driving purpose to make himself a better person. He did. And he made us all a little bit better along the way.

Dolores Conchita Figueroa del Rivero knows the adversity that comes with a difficult name.

[*Laughter*] I can relate. [*Laughter*] Known to the world by the name that has lit up Broadway marquees, Chita Rivera's career had an improbable start. Accompanying a nervous classmate on an audition, she decided to audition herself, and impressed the choreographer, Jerome Robbins, who would make her famous as Anita in "West Side Story." Sassy, electric—that rare performer who can sing, dance, and act—Chita Rivera revealed that still rarer ability to overcome when she recovered from a car accident that shattered her leg. She ended up retaking the stage, won a Tony for "Kiss of the Spider Woman." And like her unforgettable Anita, Chita Rivera has shown that life can indeed be bright in America.

The only girl in a family of four brothers, Mary Robinson learned early on what it takes to make sure all voices are heard. As a crusader for women and those without a voice in Ireland, Mary Robinson was the first woman elected President of Ireland, before being appointed U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights. When she traveled abroad as President, she would place a light in her window that would draw people of Irish descent to pass by below. Today, as an advocate for the hungry and the hunted, the forgotten and the ignored, Mary Robinson has not only shone a light on human suffering, but illuminated a better future for our world.

After graduating from the University of Chicago School of Medicine in 1948, Janet Rowley got married and gave birth to four sons, making medicine a hobby and making family her priority. It was not until she was almost 40 that she took up serious medical research, and not until almost a decade later that she discovered, hunched over her dining room table, examining small photos of chromosomes, that leukemia cells are notable for changes in their genetics, a discovery that showed cancer is genetic and transformed how we fight the disease. All of us have been touched in some way by cancer, including my family, and so we can all be thankful that what began as a hobby became a life's work for Janet.

The glint in the eye and the lilt in the voice are familiar to us all. But the signature quality of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, says Nelson Mandela, is "a readiness to take unpopular stands without fear." Perhaps that explains what led the Arch, as he's known, to preach amid tear gas and police dogs, rallying a people against apartheid. And later, when a free South Africa needed a heart big enough to forgive its sins, Archbishop Desmond Tutu was called to serve once more, as chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Tribune of the downtrodden, voice of the oppressed, cantor of our conscience, Desmond Tutu possesses that sense of generosity, that spirit of unity, that essence of humanity that South Africans know simply as *Ubuntu*.

Thirty-five years ago, a young economics professor at a university in Bangladesh was struck by the disconnect between the theories he was teaching in class and the reality of the famine outside. So, determined to help, Muhammad Yunus left the classroom for a village and discovered that just $27 would free dozens of artisans, vendors, and rickshaw pullers from debt. Offering himself as a guarantor, he withdrew a loan, paid off their debts, and founded Grameen Bank, a bank that has disbursed over $8 billion, lifting millions of people from poverty with microloans. Muhammad Yunus was just trying to help a village, but he somehow managed to change the world.

There's a story Ted Kennedy sometimes tells. It's about a boy who sees an old man tossing starfish stranded by a receding tide back into the sea. "There are so many," asks the boy, "what difference can your efforts possibly make?" The old man studies the starfish in his hand and tosses it to safety, saying, "It makes a difference to that one." For nearly half a century, Ted Kennedy has been walking that beach, making a difference for that soldier fighting for freedom, that refugee looking for a way home, that senior searching for dignity, that worker striving for opportunity, that student aspiring to college, that family reaching for the American Dream. The life of Senator Edward M. Kennedy has made a difference for us all.

These are the 2009 recipients of the Medal of Freedom. At a moment when cynicism and doubt too often prevail, when our obligations

to one another are too often forgotten, when the road ahead can seem too long or hard to tread, these extraordinary men and women—these agents of change—remind us that excellence is not beyond our abilities, that hope lies around the corner, and that justice can still be won in the forgotten corners of this world. They remind us that we each have it within our powers to fulfill dreams, to advance the dreams of others, and to remake the world for our children.

And it is now my distinct and extraordinary honor to ask each of them to come forward to receive their award, as a military aide reads their citation.

[*At this point, Lt. Col. Gina C. Humble, USAF, Air Force Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the medals.*]

The President. Before we break up, why don't we all give an extraordinary round of applause to these remarkable men and women.

Thank you very much for joining us, everyone. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:07 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Nancy G. Brinker, founder, Susan G. Komen for the Cure; and former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa. Participating in the event were Joanne Kemp, wife of Jack Kemp; Kara Kennedy Allen, daughter of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy; and Stuart Milk, nephew of Harvey Milk.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of Emergency Regarding Export Control Regulations
August 13, 2009

Dear Madam Speaker: (Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice, stating that the emergency caused by the lapse of the Export Administration Act of 1979, as amended, is to continue in effect for 1 year beyond August 17, 2009.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting Budget Amendments for Fiscal Year 2010 for the Department of Defense
August 13, 2009

Dear Madam Speaker:

I am committed to supporting our troops and will continue to promote policies that maintain their high level of readiness and that improve the quality of life of servicemembers and their families. To that end, as part of the constant assessment of Department of Defense (DOD) operations, my Administration proposes to increase temporarily the Army's active component by up to 22,000 personnel, including 15,000 troops in Fiscal Year 2010.

This increase will allow military commanders to reduce the strain on the force and increase

time at home between deployments. Eight years of sustained combat operations have weighed heavily on our soldiers and their families. Expanding the Army to 562,400 troops in 2010 will reduce stress and strain on soldiers and families. It will increase the number of troops available to deploy while also helping the Army to end the practice of retaining soldiers beyond their period of obligated service.

I ask the Congress to consider the enclosed Fiscal Year 2010 Budget amendments for the DOD. These amendments are offset through the reallocation of approximately $1.0 billion from lower-priority DOD contingency operations' requirements, which are no longer needed at the current time due to changed circumstances because sufficient resources exist to protect United States personnel. Details of these requests are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Belgrade, Montana
August 14, 2009

The President. Hello, Montana! Thank you. It's great to be here. Please, everybody have a seat, have a seat. Thank you so much. Thank you. I am excited to be back in Montana. I want to——

Q. Where's Michelle?

The President. Where's Michelle? Come on, what is this, chopped liver here? [*Laughter*] Michelle and the girls were supposed to go white water rafting. Now, I just heard some rain out there, so I don't know what's going on there, but they're on their way.

I want to first of all acknowledge some outstanding public officials and great friends. First of all, the man who is working tirelessly to make sure that the American people get a fair deal when it comes to health care in America, please give Max Baucus a big round of applause. Thank you, Max. One of my favorite people in Washington, probably because he hasn't gone Washington—still gets the same haircut—give it up for Jon Tester. Your own star here in Montana, the great Governor of this State, please give Brian Schweitzer and his lovely wife Nancy a big round of applause. The Lieutenant Governor, John Bohlinger, is here. Give John a big round of applause. The mayor of Belgrade, Russ Nelson, is here. The mayor of Bozeman, Kaaren Jacobson, is here. And somebody who I believe is destined to be one of the greatest Secretaries of the Interior in our history, former Senator from Colorado, Ken Salazar is here. Please give Ken a big round of applause.

Well, it is nice to be back. It's nice to take a break from the going-ons in Washington. I'm thrilled to have a chance to spend some time with the folks in this beautiful State. After all, here in Montana, you've got bears and moose and elk. In Washington, you just have mostly bull. [*Laughter*] So this is a—[*applause*]—this is a nice change of pace, being in Montana.

I especially want to thank Katie for her introduction. Where'd Katie go? There she is, right there. Katie's willingness to talk about such a painful experience is important, because we have to understand what's at stake in this health care debate. Katie's story is the kind of story that I've read in letters all throughout the campaign and everyday when I'm President. I hear about them in town halls all across America: the stories of hard-working people who are doing the right thing, they're acting responsibly, only to find out that they're penalized because others aren't doing the right thing, because others aren't acting responsibly.

On Tuesday, I was in New Hampshire talking about people denied insurance coverage because of preexisting conditions. Now, today we're talking about folks like Katie who've had their insurance policies suddenly revoked, even though they were paying premiums, because of a medical condition. They got sick,

and suddenly, that's when they get dropped. Tomorrow, in Colorado, we'll be talking about the people who have insurance but are still stuck with huge bills because they've hit a cap on their benefits, or they're charged exorbitant out-of-pocket fees.

And when you hear about these experiences, when you think of the millions of people denied coverage because of preexisting conditions, when you think about the thousands who have their policies cancelled each year, like Katie, I want you to remember one thing: There but for the grace of God go I. Most of us have insurance. And most of us think, you know, knock on wood, that we're going to stay healthy. But we're no different than Katie and other ordinary Americans, no different than anybody else. We are held hostage at any given moment by health insurance companies that deny coverage or drop coverage or charge fees that people can't afford at a time when they desperately need care.

It's wrong. It's bankrupting families; it's bankrupting businesses. And we are going to fix it when we pass health insurance reform this year. We are going to fix it. Now, again, I want to specially thank Max for his hard work on a bill as chair of the Finance Committee. He has been committed to getting this done.

This is obviously,a tough time in America; it's a tough time here in Montana. Just 6 months ago, we were in the middle of the worst recession in our lifetimes. We were losing about 700 [700,000]* jobs each month. Economists of all stripes feared a second coming of a great depression. And that's why we acted as fast as we could to pass a recovery plan to stop the freefall.

I want to just speak briefly about the recovery plan because that has colored how people view the health care debate. The recovery plan was divided into three parts. One-third of the money in the Recovery Act went to tax cuts that have already started showing up in the paychecks of about 400,000 working families in Montana. Four hundred thousand working families have seen their taxes reduced because of the Recovery Act. We also cut taxes for small businesses on the investments that they make, and more than 200 Montana small businesses have now qualified for new loans backed by the Recovery Act, including 10 businesses right in the Bozeman area.

Another third of the money in the Recovery Act is for emergency relief for folks who've borne the brunt of this recession. What am I talking about? Unemployment insurance: We've extended benefits for 40,000 Montana residents. We've made health insurance 65 percent cheaper for families who rely on COBRA when they lose their job and they're out there looking for work. And I think as your Governor will testify, for States facing historic budget shortfalls, we provided assistance that has saved the jobs of tens of thousands of workers who provide essential services, like teachers and police officers. We've prevented painful job cuts, but we've also prevented a lot of painful State and local tax increases. So that's two-thirds of the Recovery Act.

The last third of the Recovery Act is for investments that are already putting people back to work: rebuilding infrastructure. There are nearly 70 transportation projects already approved here in Montana. These are jobs fixing up the roads that run through the national forests, good jobs doing the work that America needs done. And most of the work is being done by local businesses, because that's how we're going to get this economy growing again.

So there is no doubt that the recovery plan is doing what we said it would, putting us on the road to recovery. We saw last Friday the jobs picture is beginning to turn. We're starting to see signs that business investment is coming back. So people, I think, sometimes when I listen to them on TV or on these cable shows, they seem to have a selective memory. We started with this mess. We're now pulling out of it. But that doesn't mean we're out of the woods. That doesn't mean we're out of the woods. You know that. In Bozeman, for example, the local job center recently reported seeing more than 8,000 job seekers for just 160 jobs.

So we can't just sit back and do nothing while families are struggling. Because even before this recession hit, we had an economy that was

* White House correction

working pretty well for the wealthiest Americans, working pretty well for Wall Street bankers and big corporations, but it wasn't working so well for everybody else. It was an economy of bubbles and busts. It was an economy in which recklessness, and not responsibility, was rewarded. We can't go back to that kind of economy.

If we want a country that succeeds in the 21st century, then we have to lay a new foundation for lasting prosperity. And health insurance reform is one of the key pillars of this new foundation. This economy won't work for everyone until folks like Katie and her husband can start that small business without fear of losing their health coverage, until companies aren't slashing payroll and losing profits to pay for health insurance, until every single American has the security and the peace of mind of knowing they've got quality, affordable care.

And the fact is, health care touches all of our lives in a profound way. Now, that also makes this debate an emotional one. I know there's been a lot of attention paid to some of the town hall meetings that are going on around the country, especially when tempers flare; TV loves a ruckus.

What you haven't seen on TV—and what makes me proud—are the many constructive meetings going on all over the country. Everywhere across the country, you're seeing people who are coming together and having a civil, honest, often difficult conversation about how we can improve the system. That's how democracy is supposed to work.

Earlier this week, I held a town hall in New Hampshire. A few thousand people showed up. Some were big supporters of health insurance reform, some had concerns and questions, some were downright skeptical, didn't believe it could be done. But I was glad to see that people were there not to shout, they were there to listen and ask questions. That reflects America a lot more than what we've seen covered on television for the last few days, and I want to thank you for coming here today in that spirit.

Now—but before I take questions, I just want to talk briefly about what health insurance reform will mean for you. And we still have work to do in Congress; the bills aren't finalized. But I just want you to understand, about 80 percent of this has already been agreed to. And here are the basic principles that folks are talking about.

First, health insurance reform will mean a set of commonsense consumer protections for folks with health insurance. So those of you who have health insurance, this is—its mean—this is what it will mean. Insurance companies will no longer be able to cancel your coverage because you get sick. That's what happened to Katie. It can't happen anymore.

If you do the responsible thing, if you pay your premiums each month so that you are covered in case of a crisis, when that crisis comes—if you have a heart attack or your husband finds out he has cancer or your son or daughter is rushed to the hospital—at the time when you're most vulnerable and most frightened, you can't be getting a phone call from your insurance company saying that your insurance is revoked. It turns out, once you got sick, they scoured your records looking for reasons to cancel your policy. They'd find a minor mistake on your insurance form that you submitted years ago. That can't be allowed to happen.

One report found that three insurance companies alone had canceled 20,000 policies in this way over the past few years. One man from Illinois lost his coverage in the middle of chemotherapy because his insurer discovered he hadn't reported gallstones he didn't know about—true story. Because his treatment was delayed, he died. A woman from Texas was diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer, was scheduled for a double mastectomy. Three days before surgery, the insurance company canceled the policy, in part because she forgot to declare a case of acne—true story. By the time she had her insurance reinstated, the cancer had more than doubled in size.

And this is personal for me. I'll never forget my own mother, as she fought cancer in her final months, having to worry about whether the insurance company would refuse to pay for her treatment. The insurance company was

arguing that she should have known that she had cancer when she took her new job, even though it hadn't been diagnosed yet. If it could happen to her, it could happen to any one of us. It's wrong, and when we pass health insurance reform, we're going to put a stop to it once and for all. That is what Max Baucus is working on.

Number two, insurance companies will be prohibited from denying coverage because of your medical history. A recent report found that in the past 3 years, more than 12 million Americans were discriminated against by insurance companies because of a preexisting condition. No one holds these companies accountable for these practices. But we will.

And insurance companies will no longer be able to place an arbitrary cap on the amount of coverage you can receive in a given year or a lifetime. And that will help 3,700 households in Montana. We'll place a limit on how much you can be charged for out-of-pocket expenses as well, because no one in America should be broke when they get sick. And finally, we'll require insurance companies to cover routine checkups and preventive care, like mammograms and colonoscopies, because that saves money and that saves lives.

So that's what health care reform is all about. Right now we've got a health care system that all too often works better for the insurance companies than it does for the American people. We want to change that.

Now, if you are 1 of nearly 46 million people who don't have health insurance, you'll finally have quality, affordable options. And if you do have health insurance, we'll help make sure that your insurance is more affordable and more secure. If you like your health care plan, you can keep your health care plan. This is not some Government takeover. If you like your doctor, you can keep seeing your doctor. This is important. I don't want Government bureaucrats meddling in your health care, but I also don't want insurance companies bureaucrats meddling in your health care either. That's what reform's about.

Now, let me say this: Under the proposals that Max is working on, more than 100,000 middle class Montanans will get a health care tax credit. More than 200,000 Montanans will have access to a new marketplace where you can easily compare health insurance options. Nearly 30,000 small businesses in Montana will be helped by new tax benefits as well. And we will do all this without adding to our deficit over the next decade, largely by cutting waste and ending sweetheart deals for insurance companies that don't make anybody any healthier.

So the fact is, we are closer to achieving health insurance reform than we've ever been in history. We have the American Nurses Association and the American Medical Association on board because America's doctors and nurses know how badly we need reform. We have broad agreement in Congress on about 80 percent of what we're trying to achieve, and we continue to work on the other 20 percent. We have an agreement from the drug companies, who violently opposed reform in the past, to make prescription drugs more affordable for seniors. The AARP supports this policy and agrees with us that reform must happen this year.

But because we're getting close, the fight is getting fierce. And the history is clear: Every time we are in sight of health insurance reform, the special interests fight back with everything they've got. They use their influence, they run their ads, and their political allies try to scare the heck out of everybody. It happened in '93; it's happening now. It happened, by the way, when Lyndon Johnson tried to propose Medicare. It happened when John F. Kennedy tried to propose Medicare.

We can't let them do it again, not this time, because for all the scare tactics out there, what is truly scary—what's truly risky is if we do nothing. If we keep the system the way it is right now, we will continue to see 14,000 Americans lose their health insurance every day. And that could be you. Premiums will continue to skyrocket, rising three times faster than wages. That will be you. The deficit will continue to grow. Medicare will go into the red in less than a decade.

So for all the seniors out there who understandably are worried about Medicare, understand, if we don't reform the system, in about 8 years, Medicare goes into the red. And given the deficits that we have right now, we've got to

start thinking how are we going to pay for that. Insurance companies will continue to profit by discriminating against people for being sick.

So if you want a different future—a brighter future—I need your help. Change is never easy, and by the way, it never starts in Washington. It starts with you. So I need you to keep knocking on doors, talking to your neighbors. Spread the facts. Fight against the fear. This is not about politics; this is about helping the American people. And if we can get it done this year, the American people are going to be better off.

Thank you, Montana. Thank you.

All right, everybody have a seat. So we are going to try to take as many questions as we can in the time that we've got. And we haven't preselected anybody or prescreened the questions. All we want to do is just ask you to raise your hand if you've got a question. And I'm going to go girl, boy, girl, boy so I don't get into trouble. [*Laughter*]

There are people in the audience with microphones, as you can see. And so if you can—once I call on you—if you can just wait until they bring the microphone, stand up so we can all see your lovely face, and introduce yourself, and then I will ask—I will answer the question. And if you can keep your questions relatively brief, I'll try to keep my answers relatively brief.

All right, this young lady right here in the blue blouse. Right there.

Health Care Reform/Comparison With Foreign Health Care Systems

Q. Hi, Mr. President. Thank you so much for coming to southwest Montana. We really appreciate you being here.

The President. Thank you. It's great to be here.

Q. My name is Carol Wilder. I was laid off in January. I am currently uninsured. My two children have Medicaid right now. And my question is, without going into too much detail, can you tell us what you—if you have kind of looked at Canada, the—England's system, and sort of—can you pick and choose from those systems that work, that we see there's some success rate and apply that to what you're trying to push through right now?

The President. Well, let me tell you what happens in other industrialized countries. First of all, I think it's important for everybody to understand that Americans spend $5,000 to $6,000 per person more than any other advanced nation on Earth—$5,000 or $6,000 more than any other person—any other country on Earth.

Now, if you think that—how can that be? Well, you probably don't notice it, because what's happening is, if you've got health insurance through your job, more and more of what would be your salary and wages is going to health insurance. But you don't notice it; you just notice that you're not getting a raise. But a bigger and bigger portion of compensation is going to health care here in the United States. Now that's point number one.

So clearly we've got a system that isn't as efficient as it should be, because we're not healthier than these people in these other countries. Having said that, most other countries have some form of single-payer system. There are differences. Canada and England have more of what's called—what people, I guess, would call a "socialized system," in the sense that government owns the hospitals, directly hires doctors. But there are a whole bunch of countries like the Netherlands where what they do is—it's a single-payer system only in the sense that government pays the bill, but it's all private folks out there: private doctors, private facilities. So there are a bunch of different ways of doing it.

Now, what we need to do is come up with a uniquely American way of providing care. So I'm not in favor of a Canadian system, I'm not in favor of a British system, I'm not in a favor of a French system. That's not what Max is working on. Every one of us, what we've said is, let's find a uniquely American solution because historically here in the United States the majority of people get their health insurance on the job. So let's build on that system that already exists, because for us to completely change that, it would be too disruptive. That's where suddenly people would lose what they have, and they'd have to adjust to an entirely

new system. And Max and I agree that's not the right way to go.

So all we've said is, in building a better system, what are the elements? Well, number one, for people like you, you should be able to get some help going into the private insurance marketplace and buying health insurance. So we would give you a tax credit, a subsidy of some sort, to help you obtain insurance.

Now, the problem is, if you're going out there on your own, then it's much more expensive than if you go in a big group. So we would allow you to buy into a health care exchange that would give you some power to negotiate for a better rate, because you're now part of a big pool. We would also make sure that if you do have health insurance that you are protected from some of the policies that we've already talked about that have not been very good for consumers. So you wouldn't be able to be banned for preexisting conditions. There would be caps on the amount of out-of-pocket expenses you would have to spend. So we would reform the insurance market for people who already have health insurance.

And if we do those things—making it better for folks who already have insurance, making it easier for you to buy insurance, and helping small businesses who want to do the right thing by their employees, but just can't afford it because they're charged very high rates, they can't get a good deal from the insurance companies—if we do those things, then we can preserve the best of what our system offers—the innovation, the dynamism—but also make sure that people aren't as vulnerable. Now, that's essentially what we're talking about with health care reform.

And so when you start hearing people saying, you know, we're trying to get socialized medicine and we're trying to have Government bureaucrats meddle in your decisionmaking between you and your doctor, that's just not true.

All right? Okay. It's a guy's turn. Gentleman right there in the back, with the green.

Medicare

Q. I think most of us know that Medicare is one of the best social programs this Nation has ever put together. It works extremely well and helps the people who need it the most. But money doesn't grow on trees.

The President. Right.

Q. How can we be assured that increasing coverage to others is not going to make Medicare more expensive or less effective?

The President. Well, I think this is a good point, and I appreciate the question, because a lot of seniors are concerned about this. First of all, it is important to know that Medicare is a Government program. So when you hear people saying, "I hate Government programs, but keep your hands off my Medicare"—[*laughter*]—then there's a little bit of a contradiction there. And I have been hearing that quite a bit, all right? So I just want to—[*applause*]—I want to be clear about that.

Medicare is a terrific program, and it gives our seniors security. And I want Medicare to be there for the next generation, not just for this generation. But if we don't make some changes in how the delivery system works, if we don't eliminate some of the waste and inefficiencies in the system, then seniors are really going to be vulnerable. So what we've proposed is not to reduce benefits—benefits on Medicare would stay the same—it's not to ration. What we are asking is that we eliminate some of the practices that aren't making people healthier.

Example number one, subsidies to insurance companies under Medicare amount to about $177 billion over 10 years. That's how much we think we could save by eliminating subsidies to insurance companies that are offering what's called Medicare Advantage. It doesn't help seniors any more than regular Medicare does.

And so if we took that $177 billion, we're not making seniors worse off, but we've got that money now not only to strengthen the health care system overall, but potentially to cover more people. Now, the insurance companies don't like it, but it's the right thing to do.

Let me give you another example of changes that we should make. Right now when you go into the hospital, you get a procedure under Medicare, if you end up having to come back to that hospital a week later because something went wrong, they didn't do it right, the hospital doesn't pay any penalty for that; they just get

reimbursed for a second time or a third time, same fee, same service.

Now, think about that if car—auto repair shops operated the same way. You take your car in, you get it fixed, and a week later, the thing is broken again. You go in, the guy says, "Well, let me charge you all over again, and I'll do just the same thing." That doesn't make sense. So what we've said is, let's give hospitals an incentive. Let's say to the hospitals, we're going to charge you for overall treatment of whatever the problem is. And if you get it right the first time, you get to keep a little extra money. But if you keep on having the person coming back again and again, then there's a disincentive.

Those are the examples of the kinds of changes that can be made that aren't reductions in benefits, but they save the system money overall, and by the way, will actually increase the life expectancy of the Medicare Trust Fund, which is in deep trouble if we don't do something, because as you said, money doesn't grow on trees. So we're actually trying to help preserve Medicare and make people healthier in the process.

All right, young lady in the back there—right there. No, well, actually, I was pointing—I didn't see you. Right there. No, the young lady in the blue who stood up there.

Medicaid/Health Care Reform

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. My name is Sarah Landry, and I'm a Bozeman resident. Sorry, I'm a little nervous.

The President. That's okay, you're doing great. [*Laughter*]

Q. I'm—thank you—I'm a single mother of two children. I'm an MSU student. I have a son that suffers from many disabilities. He's disabled for the rest of his life. He's 11 years old. He suffers from autism, he's nonverbal, he suffers from extremely hard-to-control epilepsy, and he's type 1 diabetic. He has been sick with these ailments ever since he was 9 months old. My question to you is, I rely heavily on his Medicaid to support good health care for him. What, with this reform, would happen with his Medicaid—Medicare coverage—or Medicaid coverage, sorry.

The President. First of all, thank you for sharing your story. You are a heroic mom, so we are grateful to you, and your son's lucky.

If you currently qualify for Medicaid—your son currently qualifies for Medicaid, he would continue to qualify for Medicaid. So it would not have an impact on his benefit levels and his ability to get the care that he needs.

Some of the reforms that we're talking about, though—what I just referred to as delivery system reforms, where we help, for example, encourage doctors when they are seeing a patient, instead of having five tests, do one test and then e-mail all the tests to five specialists—those kinds of changes can save money in the Medicaid and the Medicare systems overall, and that will actually help Governor Schweitzer, who has to come up with half of Medicaid in his State budget every year, it will actually help him then be able to pay for it.

So we're not changing the benefit levels or who qualifies for Medicaid. We might see some expansion of Medicaid, in fact, under the reforms that have been proposed in some of the legislation, but we do have to make the whole system overall just a little bit smarter, make sure we're getting a better bang for the buck, so that the money is there for the services that your son needs. Okay?

This also includes, by the way, preventive care, wellness care, because our system really is not a health care system, it's more like a disease care system, right? We wait until people get sick and then we provide them care. Now, think about it. Are we better off waiting until somebody gets diabetes and then paying a surgeon for a foot amputation, or are we better off having somebody explain to a person who's obese and at risk of diabetes, to change their diet, and if they contract diabetes to stay on their medications? Obviously, the second is more cost-efficient, but right now the health care system is perverse. It does not incentivize those things that actually make people better or to—keeps them out of hospitals in the first place, and that's what we have to change overall to make sure that the resources are there for your son. Okay?

It's a gentleman's turn, and I'm going to call on that gentleman right there—right there.

Taxes/Paying for Health Care Reform

Q. My name is Randy——

The President. Hold on, Randy. There you go.

Q. Okay. My name is Randy Rathie; I'm from Ekalaka, Montana. And as you can see, I'm a proud NRA member. [*Applause*]

The President. [*Laughter*] There you go.

Q. I believe in our Constitution, and it's a very important thing. I also get my news from the cable networks because I don't like the spin that comes from them other places.

The President. Oh, you got to be—you got to be careful about them cable networks, though. [*Laughter*] But that's okay, go ahead, go on with your question.

Q. Max Baucus, our Senator, has been locked up in a dark room there for months now trying to come up with some money to pay for these programs. And we keep getting the bull. That's all we get, is bull. You can't tell us how you're going to pay for this. You're saving here; you're saving over there. You're going to take a little money here; you're going to take a little money there. But you have no money. The only way you're going to get that money is to raise our taxes. You said you wouldn't. Max Baucus says he doesn't want to put a bill out that will. But that's the only way you can do that.

The President. Well, let—I'm happy to answer the question.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Look, you are absolutely right that I can't cover another 46 million people for free. You're right, I can't do that. So we're going to have to find some resources. If people who don't have health insurance are going to get some help, then we're going to have to find money from somewhere.

Now, what I've identified and most of the committees have identified and agreed to, including Max Baucus's committee, is that there—overall, this bill will cost—let's say it costs $800 to $900 billion. That's a lot of money. That's a lot of money. That's over 10 years, though, all right? So that's about $90 billion—$80 to $90 billion a year.

About two-thirds of it—two-thirds—can be obtained by doing some of the things I already mentioned, like eliminating subsidies to insurance companies. So you're right, that's real money. I just think I would rather be giving that money to the young lady here who doesn't have health insurance and giving her some help, than giving it to insurance companies that are making record profits. Now, you may disagree. I just think that's a good way to spend our money.

But your point is well taken, because even after we spend—even after we eliminate some of the waste and we've gotten those savings from within the health care system, that's only two-thirds. That still means we've got to come up with one-third. And that's about $30 billion a year that we've got to come up with. Now, keep in mind the numbers change, partly because there are five different bills right now. This is all going to get merged in September. But let's assume it costs about $30 billion a year over 10 years. We do have to come up with that money.

When I was campaigning, I made a promise that I would not raise your taxes if you made $250,000 a year or less. That's what I said. But I said that for people like myself, who make more than that, there's nothing wrong with me paying a little bit more in order to help people who've got a little bit less. That was my commitment.

So what I've said is, let's, for example, just—this is the solution that I originally proposed; some Members in Congress disagree, but we're still working it through—what I've said is, we could lower the itemized deductions that I can take on my income tax returns every year so that instead of me getting 36-percent, 35-percent deductions, I'll just get 28 percent, like every—like people who make less money than me.

If I'm writing a check to my local church, I don't know why Uncle Sam should be giving me a bigger tax break than the person who makes less money than me, because that donation means just as much. If we just did that alone, just that change alone, for people making more than $250,000, that alone would pay for the health care we're talking about.

So my point is, number one, two-thirds of the money we can obtain just from eliminating waste and inefficiencies. And the Congressional Budget Office has agreed with that; this is not something I'm just making up. Republicans

don't dispute it. And then the other third we would have to find additional revenue, but it wouldn't come on the backs of the middle class.

Now, let me just make one final point. I know that there are some people who say, "I don't care how much money somebody makes; they shouldn't have to pay higher taxes." And I respect that opinion; I respect that view. But the truth of the matter is, is that we've got to get over this notion that somehow we can have something for nothing, because that's part of how we got into the deficits and the debt that we're in, in the first place.

When the previous administration passed the prescription drug bill, that was something that a lot of seniors needed, right? They needed prescription drug help. The price tag on that was hundreds of billions of dollars. You know how we paid for it? We didn't. It just got added on to the deficit and the debt.

So it amuses me sometimes when I hear some of the opponents of health care reform on the other side of the aisle or on these cable shows yelling about how we can't afford this, when Max and I are actually proposing to pay for it, and they passed something that they didn't pay for at all and left for future generations to have to pay in terms of debt. That doesn't make sense to me.

All right, can I say this, though? Randy, I appreciate your question, the respectful way you asked it, and by the way, I believe in the Constitution too. So thank you very much. Appreciate it.

All right, right there in the green, in the back there. Yes, that's you.

Continuation of Coverage/COBRA/Health Care Reform

Q. Thanks. Okay, so when funding dried up last fall due to the economic downturn, I lost my job at a nonprofit helping struggling teens. And I'd like to thank you because, because of your stimulus funding to community health clinics, I now have a new job helping people who are—[*applause*]——

The President. That's great.

Q. ——mostly uninsured people with mental health. I'm a therapist. My name's Evan Rick, by the way.

The President. That's great.

Q. So I wanted to thank you for that. But there was a gap in there where I lost my insurance in between losing my job at the nonprofit and my current job. And I'd like to ask you how you will help people with that gap when they're unemployed.

The President. Well, first of all, the recovery package, the stimulus helped people precisely with that gap when we said we'll cover 65 percent of the cost of COBRA. How many people here have been on COBRA or tried to get on COBRA? All right, so just for those of you who aren't familiar with it, if you lose your job, under Federal law you're able to access something called COBRA, which allows you to pay the premiums for the health care insurance that you had until you find your next job. Sounds like a good deal.

Here's the only problem: As I said before, most of us don't realize how much our insurance costs our employers because we're not seeing the actual bill that's being paid mostly by our employers. So when we lose a job, suddenly we get this bill for a thousand dollars or $1,200 or $1,500 a month, and that's absolutely the worst time for you to have to come up with that money, is when you've lost your job.

So what we did was, let's—we said, because this is such a extraordinary crisis, let's pick up 65 percent of that temporarily so that the huge numbers of people who've lost their jobs because of this financial downturn, they get a little bit more of a cushion.

Now, that was the initial help that we wanted to do to provide that bridge. When we pass health reform, you are going to be in a position where, first of all, you will be able to have selected a plan that you can carry with you whether you've lost your job or not, and depending on your income levels, you will also be qualified for a tax credit that will help you pay and continue your coverage even if you've lost your job.

And for a lot of people—this is especially important for a lot of people who are self-employed, because increasingly, you know, if

you're a consultant, you're somebody who's opened up your own shop, a little mom-and-pop store somewhere, you are the people who have the toughest time getting insurance because you just don't have enough employees for the insurance companies to take you seriously.

That's why what we want to do is create an exchange, it's like a marketplace, where you can go and choose from a menu of different options, different kinds of plans that you think might be right for you. And one of the options that's being debated is, should there be a public option, all right? And I want to just explain this briefly, because this is where the whole myth of a Government takeover of health care comes from. And not everybody—not even every Democrat—agrees on the public option, but I just want at least people to be informed about what the debate is about.

The idea is, if you go to that marketplace and you're choosing from a bunch of different options, should one of the options be a Government-run plan that still charges you premiums? You still have to pay for it just like private insurance, but Government would not—this Government option would not have the same profit motive. It would be, obviously, like a non-for-profit. It would have potentially lower overhead, so it might be able to give you a better deal. Should you be able to choose from that option among many others? That's what the debate is about.

Now, what the opponents of a public option will argue is, you can't have a level playing field; if Government gets into the business of providing health insurance, they will drive private insurers out of the health insurance market. That's the argument that's made. And I—that is a legitimate—it's a fair concern, especially if the public option was being subsidized by taxpayers, right? I mean, if they didn't—if they could just keep on losing money and still stay in business, after a while they would run everybody else out. And that's why any discussion of a public option has said that it's got to pay for itself, it's not subsidized by private insurers.

The only point I want to make about this is whether you're for or against a public option, just understand that the public option is not a Government takeover of health insurance. Everybody here who still has—who has currently private insurance, you would more than likely still be on your private insurance plan. Employers wouldn't stop suddenly providing health insurance. So that is where this idea of Government-run health care came from. It is not an accurate portrayal of the debate that's going on in Washington right now. All right?

It's a gentleman's turn. This gentleman right there; right there, yes. Yes, sir.

Health Care Providers/Paying for Health Care Reform

Q. Thank you. Given the—your comments regarding the public option, I would like, if you could, to comment on the following—and also welcome, thank you. And I believe in reform as well. I've learned that Medicare pays about 94 percent of hospital cost. And I've learned that Medicaid pays about 84 percent of hospital cost. And I've learned this from a reputable source, my brother, who is a chief administrative officer at a large hospital group. He also explains to me, when I communicate with him, that private insurers—his hospital collects about 135 percent of cost from private insurers, and that makes up the difference. So if public option is out there, will it pay for its way, or will it be underfunded like Medicare and Medicaid? Thank you.

The President. It's a great question, and I'll try to be succinct on this. This is a complicated area. Anybody who has ever gotten a bill from a hospital knows it's a complicated area. But here's the short answer. I believe that Medicare should—Medicare and Medicaid should not be obtaining savings just by squeezing providers.

Now, in some cases, we should change the delivery system so that providers have a better incentive to provide smarter care, right? So that they're treating the illness instead of just how many tests are done or how many MRIs are done or what have you—let's pay for are you curing the patient. But that's different from simply saying, you know what, we need to save some money, so let's cut payments to doctors by 10 percent and see how that works out. Because that's where you do end up having the effect that you're talking about. If they're only collecting 80 cents on the dollar, they've got to make

that up somewhere, and they end up getting it from people who have private insurance.

This is true, also, by the way, of emergency room care. Each of us spend—even though we don't know it; our employer pays for it so we don't notice it on our tab—each of us spend about a thousand dollars per family, maybe $900 per family, paying for uncompensated care, people without health insurance going in, getting fixed up. That money comes from somewhere. Well, it comes from you. You just don't see it on your bill.

And so if we can help provide coverage to people so that they're getting regular primary care and they're not going to the emergency room, we will obtain some savings, and that's partly—going to Randy's earlier question—that's partly how we'll end up paying for giving people health insurance, because we're already paying for it right now, we just don't notice it. We are paying for it in uncompensated care that is subsidized by the rest of us who have health insurance.

All right. I think this is the signal that I only have a few more questions. I'm going to take two more questions. If I'm in Montana, I got to call on somebody with a cowboy hat. [*Laughter*] Absolutely. You've got a little plaque on there—is it the——

Q. Montana Ambassadors—we're a business advisory group appointed by the Governor. We've served three Republican and two Democratic Governors, and I'd like to welcome you on behalf of the Montana Ambassadors to Montana.

The President. Thank you so much. Well, you make a great ambassador.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Absolutely.

Small-Business Owners/Health Care Coverage

Q. My question—and I'm glad you called on me—it has to do with the COBRA question, because I'm in the building materials business; I own a lumberyard in a beautiful little town of a thousand people about 40 miles southwest of here, Ennis. And I was—when the economy took a nosedive, I was forced to take my workforce from 11 people to 6. And I'm one of—like most employers in America, I want to, you know, provide—I think it's my responsibility to provide health insurance; you know, we like to take care of our peeps, so to speak. [*Laughter*] And so I went on——

The President. Is that a Montana phrase, "peeps"? [*Laughter*]

Q. And so I went searching for replacement coverage for the employees that have been laid off, only to find out that COBRA doesn't apply to me because I have less than 20 employees. And that conservatively affects 80 percent of all workers in Montana.

So they were pretty much out on their own, and I was wondering if—what we can do to eliminate discrimination against small employers. As an example, we're a lumberyard. We're out there lifting boards and packing stuff all day long. Every one of my remaining seven employees are fit. So why are we, and I as an employer, able to provide a lesser level of benefits to my employees, and yet an employer with 30 employees who sit in cubicles on their butts instead of working them off—[*laughter*]—gets a better rate?

The President. Well, that's a pretty good question. So for all of you who are all sitting on your—what did you call them? [*Laughter*] No, as I said, small business is probably as vulnerable as anybody. And one of the things that Max has been working very hard on—and this just doesn't get advertised, so I just want to make sure everybody is paying attention here—one of the things that we're trying to do is give a substantial subsidy to help small businesses allow their employees to get health insurance, because there are a lot of employers just like you who want to do the right thing, but they're a small shop, they're operating on small margins, they've got no leverage with the insurance companies.

So there are two ways we want to help. Number one, we want the small business to be able to buy into the exchange. That allows you then to use the purchasing power of everybody who is in the exchange to get the best rates from the insurance companies. That right away would drive down the premiums that you'd have to pay.

And the second thing we want to do is, for employers who are doing the right thing and

providing health insurance that is real, then we want to give you a tax break so that it's easier for you to make your bottom line.

Now, this is something that a lot of small businesses would benefit from. Nobody is talking about it. And since small businesses are the place where you're seeing the fastest job growth, it makes sense for us to provide this kind of protection. This, I guarantee you, will be—end up being an important component of whatever we pass out of Washington. All right?

I've only got time for one more question, and it's a guy's turn, and I want somebody who's got a concern or is skeptical about health care reform. Here we go, there we go. I knew we could find a couple here. So I'll call on this gentleman right here in the pale blue shirt, now—and hopefully, that list is not too long. All right, go ahead. Introduce yourself, though.

Health Insurance Providers/Health Care Reform

Q. My name is Mark Montgomery. I'm from Helena, Montana.

The President. Great to see you, Mark.

Q. All right. I appreciate you coming here. It's great to be able to do this.

The President. Thank you.

Q. Mr. President, I make a living selling individual health insurance. [*Laughter*] Okay. Obviously, I've paid very close attention to this insurance debate. As you know, the health insurance companies are in favor of health care reform and have a number of very good proposals before Congress to work with Government to provide insurance for the uninsured and cover individuals with preexisting conditions. Why is it that you've changed your strategy from talking about health care reform to health insurance reform and decided to vilify the insurance companies?

The President. Okay, that's a fair question, that's a fair question. First of all, you are absolutely right that the insurance companies, in some cases, have been constructive. So I'll give you a particular example. Aetna has been trying to work with us in dealing with some of this preexisting conditions stuff. And that's absolutely true. And there are other companies who have done the same.

Now, I want to just be honest with you, and I think Max will testify, that in some cases what we've seen is also funding in opposition by some other insurance companies to any kind of reform proposals. So my intent is not to vilify insurance companies. If I was vilifying them, what we would be doing would be to say that private insurance has no place in the health care market, and some people believe that. I don't believe that. Right. What I've said is, let's work with the existing system. We've got private insurers out there. But what we do have to make sure of is that certain practices that are very tough on people, that those practices change.

Now, one point I want to make about insurance: Some of the reforms that we want for the insurance market are very hard to achieve unless we've got everybody covered. This is the reason the insurance companies are willing to support reform, because their attitude is if we can't exclude people for preexisting conditions, for example, if we can't cherry-pick the healthy folks from the not-so-healthy folks, well, that means that we're taking on more people with more expensive care. What's in it for us? The answer is, if they've got more customers, then they're willing to make sure that they are eliminating some of these practices. If they've got fewer customers, they're less willing to do it.

So it's important for people—when people ask me sometimes, why don't you just do the insurance reform stuff and not expand coverage for more people, my answer is, I can't do the insurance reform stuff by itself. The only way that we can change some of the insurance practices that are helping—hurting people now is to make sure that everybody is covered and everybody has got a stake in it, and then the insurance companies are able and willing to make some of these changes that will help people who have insurance right now. But thank you for the question. I appreciate it.

All right. I'm going to—even though I shouldn't do this, I'm going to take one more question. My team always—and I'm going to call on this person right here to get the last word. Right here.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Go ahead.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you for coming to Bozeman and bringing your beautiful family to the last best place in the world.

Because you're a constitutional scholar, I think it would be terrible to let you escape from Montana without sharing with you the most perfect preamble to a constitution of any State constitution.

The President. Oh, okay. Well, I'd like to—I want to hear this. This is a good way to end our town hall.

Q. It is. It is. "We the people of Montana, grateful to God for the quiet beauty of our State, the grandeur of our mountains, the vastness of our rolling plains, and desiring to improve the quality of life, the quality of opportunity and to secure the blessings of liberty for this and future generations do ordain and establish this constitution." I hope you take a look at the whole constitution. You'll like it. Thank you.

The President. Well, that's very nice. Well, thank you. Listen, Montana, you've been terrific. I hope this has been informative. Thank you for the questions. Let's get to work. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:05 p.m. at Gallatin Field Airport. In his remarks, he referred to cancer survivor Katie Gibson, who introduced the President, and her husband Scott Bischke.

The President's Weekly Address
August 15, 2009

This week, I've been traveling across our country to discuss health insurance reform and to hear directly from folks like you: your questions, your concerns, and your stories.

Now, I know there's been a lot of attention paid to some of the town hall meetings that are going on around the country, especially those where tempers have flared. You know how TV loves a ruckus. But what you haven't seen, because it's not as exciting, are the many constructive meetings going on all over the country where Americans are airing their hopes and concerns about this very important issue.

I've been holding some of my own, and the stories I've heard have really underscored why I believe so strongly that health insurance reform is a challenge we can't ignore.

They're stories like Lori Hitchcock's, who I met in New Hampshire this week. Lori's got a preexisting condition, so no insurance company will cover her. She's self-employed, and in this economy, she can't find a job that offers health care, so she's been uninsured for 2 years.

Or they're stories like Katie Gibson's, who I met in Montana. When Katie tried to change insurance companies, she was sure to list her preexisting conditions on the application and even called her new company to confirm she'd be covered. Two months later, she was dropped, after she'd already gone off her other insurance.

These are stories that aren't being told, stories of a health care system that works better for the insurance industry than it does for the American people. And that's why we're going to pass health insurance reform that finally holds the insurance companies accountable.

But now's the hard part, because the history is clear: Every time we come close to passing health insurance reform, the special interests with a stake in the status quo use their influence and political allies to scare and mislead the American people.

As an example, let's look at one of the scarier-sounding and more ridiculous rumors out there: that so-called death panels would decide whether senior citizens get to live or die. That rumor began with the distortion of one idea in a congressional bill that would allow Medicare to cover voluntary visits with your doctor to discuss your end-of-life care, if and only if you decide to have those visits. It had nothing to do with putting government in control of your decisions; in fact, it would give you all the information you need, if you want it, to put you in control of your decisions. When a conservative Republican Senator who supported

this idea—in fact, had long fought for even more far-reaching proposals—found out how folks were twisting the idea, he called their misrepresentation, and I quote, "nuts."

So when folks with a stake in the status quo keep inventing these bogeymen in an effort to scare people, it's disappointing, but it's not surprising. We've seen it before. When President Roosevelt was working to create Social Security, opponents warned it would open the door to Federal snooping and force Americans to wear dog tags. When President Kennedy and President Johnson were working to create Medicare, opponents warned of socialized medicine. Sound familiar? Not only were those fears never realized, but more importantly, those programs have saved the lives of tens of millions of seniors, the disabled, and the disadvantaged.

Those who would stand in the way of reform will say almost anything to scare you about the cost of action, but they won't say much about the cost of inaction. If you're worried about rationed care, higher costs, denied coverage, or bureaucrats getting between you and your doctor, then you should know that's what's happening right now. In the past 3 years, over 12 million Americans were discriminated against by insurance companies due to a preexisting condition or saw their coverage denied or dropped just when they got sick and needed it most. Americans whose jobs and health care are secure today just don't know if they'll be next to join the 14,000 who lose their health insurance every single day. And if we don't act, average family premiums will keep rising to more than $22,000 within a decade.

On the other hand, here's what reform will mean for you. First, no matter what you've heard, if you like your doctor or health care plan, you can keep it. If you don't have insurance, you'll finally be able to afford insurance. And everyone will have the security and stability that's missing today.

Insurance companies will be prohibited from denying you coverage because of your medical history, dropping your coverage if you get sick, or watering down your coverage when it counts, because there's no point in having health insurance if it's not there when you need it.

Insurance companies will no longer be able to place some arbitrary cap on the amount of coverage you can receive in a given year or lifetime, and we will place a limit on how much you can be charged for out-of-pocket expenses, because no one in America should go broke just because they get sick.

Finally, we'll require insurance companies to cover routine checkups and preventive care, like mammograms and colonoscopies, because there's no reason we shouldn't be saving lives and dollars by catching diseases like breast cancer and prostate cancer on the front end.

So that's what reform means. For all the chatter and the noise out there, what every American needs to know is this: If you don't have health insurance, you will finally have quality, affordable options once we pass reform. If you do have health insurance, we will make sure that no insurance company or government bureaucrat gets between you and the care that you need. And we will deliver this in a fiscally responsible way.

Now, I know there's plenty of real concern and skepticism out there. I know that in a time of economic upheaval, the idea of change can be unsettling, and I know that there are folks who believe that government should have no role at all in solving our problems. These are legitimate differences worthy of the real discussion that America deserves, one where we lower our voices, listen to one another, and talk about differences that really exist. Because while there may be disagreements over how to go about it, there is widespread agreement on the urgent need to reform a broken system and finally hold insurance companies accountable.

Nearly 50 years ago, in the midst of the noisy early battles to create what would become Medicare, President Kennedy said, "I refuse to see us live on the accomplishments of another generation. I refuse to see this country, and all of us, shrink from these struggles which are our responsibility in our time." Now it falls to us to meet the challenges of our time. And if we can come together and listen to one another, I believe, as I always have, that we will rise to this moment, we will build something better for our children, and we will secure America's future in this new century.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:20 p.m. on August 13 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for broadcast on August 15. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 14, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on August 15. In the address, the President referred to Sen. Johnny Isakson.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Grand Junction, Colorado
August 15, 2009

The President. Thank you. Hello, Grand Junction. Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. I—it is good to be back in southwest Colorado. Last time I was here, I had some really good peaches. [*Laughter*] So somehow, though, Michelle and the girls got to go pick peaches, and I'm hoping they bring some back for me.

It is nice to take a break from some of the back and forth in Washington. I want to especially thank Nathan for his introduction and sharing his story. It's not easy to talk about an illness in the family. It's not easy to talk about such a painful experience. Because it's important that we understand what's at stake in the health care debate, he's been willing to share it with us. And so I'm very grateful to him.

We've got a couple of other special guests that I want to acknowledge. First of all, I stole him from you to make him what I believe will be the best Secretary of the Interior in the history of the United States, Ken Salazar. But I left things in good hands with the outstanding Congressman and brother of Ken, John Salazar. Your outstanding Governor of this great State, Bill Ritter, is here as well as the extraordinary first lady of the State, Jeannie Ritter is here as well. Two of the finest young Senators that we've got in Washington right now: Senator Mark Udall and Senator Michael Bennet.

I want to thank the hospitality of Grand Junction Mayor Bruce Hill. And finally, I want to thank Tillie Bishop for the invocation. And I want to thank the Central High students, Elise Beckstead, Crystal Rossman, Axel Urie, and Amelia LyBarger, for their national anthem and Pledge of Allegiance. Thank you, guys.

Oh, and Central High principal Jody Diers is here. And it turns out, school starts in 2 days. [*Laughter*] You know, when I was going to school, we always had until Labor Day. [*Laughter*] Things—it's rough for kids these days, but it's important for us to be able to compete internationally, so it's great to see dedicated educators like we have here at Central High.

You know, Nathan's story is the kind of story that I've read in letters and heard in town halls all across America. And on Tuesday, I was in New Hampshire talking about people denied coverage because of preexisting conditions. Yesterday I was in Montana talking about people who've had their insurance policies suddenly revoked, even though they were paying their premiums, just because they got sick. Today we're talking about people like Nathan and his family who have insurance but are still stuck with huge bills because they've hit a cap on their benefits or they're charged exorbitant out-of-pocket fees.

And when you hear about these experiences, when you think about the millions of people denied coverage because of preexisting conditions and the thousands who have had their policies canceled because of an illness, the countless people like Nathan, I want you to remember one thing: There but for the grace of God go I. This is something that sometimes we've forgotten during the course of this health care debate. These are ordinary Americans. They're no different from anybody else. They're working hard, they're meeting their responsibilities, but they're held hostage by health insurance companies that deny them coverage or drop their coverage or charge fees that they can't afford for care that they desperately need. It's hurting too many families and

businesses. It's wrong, and we're going to fix it when we pass health insurance reform this year.

Now, this is obviously a tough time for the families in Colorado and all across America. I just want to rewind the clock a little bit, because sometimes people have forgotten what's transpired over the last 7, 8 months. Just 6 months ago, we were in the middle of the worst recession of our lifetimes. We were losing about 700,000 jobs each month. Economists from the left and the right, liberals and conservatives, feared the second coming of the Great Depression. I don't know if everybody remembers that. That was 6 months ago. That's why we acted as fast as we could to pass a recovery plan to stop the freefall. And there's been a lot of misinformation about that, so let me just talk briefly about what it is that we did.

The recovery plan was divided into three parts. One-third of the money—one-third of the money in the Recovery Act, the stimulus plan, went to tax cuts that are already showing up in the paychecks of nearly 2 million working families in Colorado, including right here in Grand Junction. So I just want everybody to be clear: one-third of it, tax cuts—not tax increases—more money in your pockets to spend as you wish.

We also cut taxes for small businesses on the investments that they make, and hundreds of Colorado small businesses have qualified for new loans backed by the Recovery Act, including 11 businesses in Grand Junction alone. So that was one-third of it.

Now, another third of the money in the Recovery Act is for emergency relief for folks who've borne the brunt of this recession. So we've extended unemployment benefits for more than 150,000 Colorado citizens. We've made health insurance 65 percent cheaper for families who are having to use COBRA because they lost their jobs and they're out there looking for work. And for States facing historic budget shortfalls, we provided assistance that has saved the jobs of tens of thousands of workers who provide essential services, like teachers and police officers. And Governor Ritter will tell you, if we had not had some of that money in, then Colorado would have had to make much more painful job cuts in vital services and might have had to put in place some very painful State and local tax increases. So that was the second third of the Recovery Act.

Now, the last third of the Recovery Act is for investments that are already putting people back to work. There are almost 100 shovel-ready transportation projects already approved in Colorado which are beginning to create jobs. Not far from here, for example, there's a project to pave and add lanes to State Highway 92. Most of the work is being done by local businesses, because that's how we're going to create jobs and grow this economy again.

And by next month, projects will be underway at more than 100 national parks all over America, including Colorado. Now, these are projects restoring trails, improving infrastructure, making park facilities more energy efficient. Earlier today, some of you may know, I toured Yellowstone with Michelle and the girls. We saw Old Faithful; I hadn't seen it since I was 11 years old. It's still going strong. [*Laughter*] Tomorrow we're going to be visiting the Grand Canyon.

And I recently signed into law a public lands bill that designates the Dominguez-Escalante Canyon as a national conservation area here in Colorado. These are national treasures, symbols of how much we owe to those who came before us and the fact that we're borrowing this Earth from those who will follow us. And I want to thank especially Ken Salazar, because he's been leading the way on these vital issues, especially in the West. As we grapple with enormous challenges like health care, the work of generations past reminds us of our duty to generations yet to come.

So there is no doubt that the recovery plan is doing what we said it would: putting us on the road to recovery. It's not solving all problems. Unemployment is still way too high. But we just saw last week that the jobs picture is beginning to turn. We're starting to see signs that business investment is coming back, but that doesn't mean we're out of the woods. Even before this extraordinary financial crisis, we had an economy that was working pretty well for the wealthiest Americans—working pretty well for Wall Street bankers, for big corporations—but it wasn't working so well for everybody else. It

was an economy of bubbles and busts. It was an economy in which the average worker, their wages and incomes had flatlined for a decade. It was an economy that rewarded recklessness over responsibility. So we can't go back to that kind of economy.

If we want this country to succeed in the 21st century, we've got to lay a new foundation for lasting prosperity. And health insurance reform is a key pillar of this new foundation, because this economy won't work for everyone until folks like Nathan and his family aren't pushed to the brink of bankruptcy by medical expenses, until companies aren't slashing payrolls and losing profits to pay for health insurance, until every single American has the security and peace of mind of quality, affordable health care.

And health care touches us all in profound ways, which, by the way, means that it's only natural this debate is going to be an emotional one. There's a lot at stake. And I know there's been a lot of attention paid to some of the town hall meetings that are going on around the country, especially those where tempers have flared, and TV really likes that. So you can have 20 really great town hall meetings, and if there's one where somebody loses their temper, that's the one TV wants to cover.

What you haven't been seeing are the constructive meetings going on all over the country. That doesn't mean people agree with me on every single issue, but it means that we've been trying to figure out how do we solve what we know is an unsustainable problem in our health care system.

So just yesterday I held a town hall in Belgrade, Montana, and we had a pretty good crowd. Some were big supporters of reform. Some had concerns and questions. Some were completely skeptical. And I got tough questions. But even though Montanans have strong opinions, they didn't shout at one another. They were there to listen. And that reflects the American people and what our democracy is about a lot more than what's been covered on TV these last few days. And that's why I thank all of you, whether you're for or against health care reform, for being here today.

Now, I'm going to take a bunch of questions, but before I do, I want to just talk about what health insurance reform will mean for you, because there's a lot of misunderstandings out there. First of all, what we're proposing is a commonsense set of consumer protections for people with health insurance, people with private health insurance. I expect that after reform passes, the vast majority of Americans are still going to be getting their insurance from private insurers. So we've got to have some protections in place for people like Nathan, people like you.

So insurance companies will no longer be able to place an arbitrary cap on the amount of coverage you can receive or charge outrageous out-of-pocket expenses on top of your premiums. That's what happened to Nathan and his wife. Their son's diagnosed with hemophilia when he was born. The insurance company then raised the premiums for his family and for all his coworkers who were on the same policy. The family was approaching their cap.

And so on top of worrying about taking care of their son, they had the added worry of trying to find insurance that would cover him, plus thousands and thousands of dollars in out-of-pocket costs. Nathan and wife—and his wife even considered getting a divorce so that she might possibly go on Medicaid.

Now, thankfully, Colorado's law doesn't allow coverage for small businesses to permanently exclude preexisting conditions like his son's, so eventually they found insurance. But they're paying increasing premiums, and they still have to face the prospect of hitting their new cap in the next few years.

Those are the stories I hear all over the country. I heard from a teenager in Indiana diagnosed with leukemia. The chemotherapy and intensive care he received cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. His family hit their lifetime cap in less than a year. They had insurance. So the insurance wouldn't cover a bone marrow transplant, and the family couldn't afford all the money that was needed. The family turned to the public for help, but the boy died before he could receive that transplant.

If you think that can't happen to you or your family, think again. Almost 90 percent of individual health insurance policies have lifetime benefit limits. And about a third of family plans in the individual insurance market have lifetime limits under $3 million. If you or your spouse or your child gets sick and you hit that limit, it's suddenly like you have no insurance at all.

And this is part of a larger story of folks with insurance paying more and more out of pocket. In the past few years, premiums have nearly doubled for the average American family. Total out-of-pocket costs have increased by almost 50 percent; that's more than $2,000 per person. And nobody is holding these insurance companies accountable for these practices. And by the way, your employer is paying even more, and you may not even see the costs of it except for the fact that's why you're not getting a raise, because it's going into your health care instead of your salary and income.

So we're going to ban arbitrary caps on benefits. We'll place limits on how much you can be charged for out-of-pocket expenses. No one in America should go broke because they get sick. Now, insurance companies will also be stopped from canceling your coverage because you get sick or denying coverage because of your medical history. Again, if you think this has nothing to do with you, think again. A recent report found that in the past few years, more than 12 million Americans were discriminated against by insurance companies because of a preexisting condition. When we get health insurance reform, those days will be over. And we will require insurance companies to cover routine checkups and preventive care, like mammograms and colonoscopies. That saves money; it saves lives.

At the same time—now, I just want to be completely clear about this. I keep on saying this, but somehow folks aren't listening: If you like your health care plan, you keep your health care plan. Nobody is going to force you to leave your health care plan. If you like your doctor, you keep seeing your doctor. I don't want government bureaucrats meddling in your health care. But the point is, I don't want insurance company bureaucrats meddling in your health care either.

So let's—just to recap here, if you're one of nearly 46 million people who don't have health insurance, you will finally have quality, affordable options. If you do have health insurance, we will help make that insurance more affordable and more secure. Under the reform proposals that we've put out there, roughly 700,000 middle class Coloradans will get a health care tax credit. More than a million Coloradans will have access to a new marketplace where you can easily compare health insurance options. Eighty-seven thousand small businesses in Colorado will be aided by new tax benefits, so when they're doing the right thing for their employees, they're not penalized for it. And we will do all of this without adding to our deficit over the next decade, largely by cutting waste and ending sweetheart deals for insurance companies that don't make anybody any healthier.

Now here—if you don't—I know there's some skepticism: "Well, how are you going to save money in the health care system?" You're doing it here in Grand Junction. You know that lowering costs is possible if you put in place smarter incentives, if you think about how to treat people, not just illnesses, if you look at problems facing not just one hospital or physician, but the many system-wide problems that are shared. That's what the medical community in this city did, and now you're getting better results while wasting less money. And I know that your Senator, Michael Bennet, has been working hard on legislation that's based on putting the innovations that are here in Grand Junction into practice across the system, and there's no reason why we can't do that.

So the fact is, we are closer to achieving reform than we've ever been. We have the American Nurses Associations, we have the American Medical Association on board, because America's doctors and nurses know how badly we need reform. We have broad agreement in Congress on about 80 percent of what we're trying to achieve. We have an agreement from drug companies to make prescription drugs more affordable for seniors, $80 billion that can cut the doughnut hole that seniors have to deal with on prescription drug plans in half. The AARP supports this policy and agrees with us that reform must happen this year.

But look, because we're getting close, the fight is getting fierce. And the history is clear: Every time we're in sight of reform, special interests start fighting back with everything they've got. They use their influence. They run their ads. And let's face it, they get people scared. And understandably—I understand why people are nervous. Health care is a big deal. In fact, whenever America has set about solving our toughest problems, there have always been those who've sought to preserve the status quo by scaring the American people.

That's what happened when FDR tried to pass Social Security; they said that was socialist. They did—that—verbatim. That's what they said. They said that everybody was going to have to wear dog tags and be—and that this was a plot for the government to keep track of everybody. When JFK and then Lyndon Johnson tried to pass Medicare, they said this was a government takeover of health care; they were going to get between you and your doctor, the same argument that's being made today. These struggles have always boiled down to a contest between hope and fear. It was true when Social Security was born. It was true when Medicare was created. It's true in today's debate.

But whether you have health insurance or you don't have health insurance, we all know we can't continue down this path. Costs are rising far faster than wages. Cuts—the system works a lot better for insurance companies than it does for America's families. To maintain what's best about our health care system, for you to keep what you've got if you're happy with it, is going to require change.

We've got to keep what's good about the system, especially the relationship between doctors, nurses, and their patients, while fixing what's broken, because for all the scare tactics out there, what's truly scary is if we don't do anything. We will continue to see 14,000 Americans lose their health insurance every day. Premiums will continue to skyrocket, going up three times faster than your wages. The deficit will continue to grow because most of it is Medicare and Medicaid. Medicare will go into the red in less than a decade. And insurance companies will continue to profit by discriminating against people just because they're sick.

So if you want a different future, a brighter future, I need your help. I need you to stand for hope. I need you to knock on doors. I need you to spread the word, because we are going to get this done this year. [*Applause*] Thank you, Grand Junction. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. All right. Now, I've got time for a bunch of questions. We've got a bunch of people in the audience with microphones. Hold up your microphones, guys. All right. Now, the way we're going to do this is I'm just going to go around the room. Raise your hand. To be fair, I'm going to make sure it's girl, boy, girl, boy. [*Laughter*] If you can introduce yourself and ask your question or make your comment, if you can keep your question or comment relatively brief, I will try to keep my answers relatively brief, and that way we can make sure that we get through more questions during the course of this event. All right? Okay. Let's see hands. And I'll start with this young lady right here in the pink blouse.

Health Care Efficiency

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Oops, hold on, the mike doesn't—can you check that mike? Is it working? Does it work?

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. My name is Polly. I work at Rocky Mountain Orthopedics here in Grand Junction. On behalf of our CEO, I would like to extend an invitation for you to visit our successful practice to see how we provide excellent health care at a lower average cost to our patients.

My question is, the original health care House bill included funding for federally qualified health centers whose future budget would be based on expenses plus inflation. If private physicians, hospitals, and other providers are going to be given incentives to reduce waste and cost, what will be done to ensure the government programs will do the same?

The President. Well, it's an excellent question. Part of what's so important about reform is that right now the way Medicare and Medicaid operates, if it's starting to go over budget,

we basically have two choices: Either we raise taxes and just keep on paying more and more—and health care inflation is going up at least twice as fast as inflation on everything else—or what we do is we just tell the providers, we're going to give you less money, period; we'll reimburse you 80 cents or 90 cents for every dollar of services that you provide. And then what happens is that the providers, they end up just charging people with private insurance to make up for the difference. So that drives everybody's costs up.

Now, what's been done here in Grand Junction, in other outstanding health programs like Mayo, is they've started to change the delivery system so that you're actually getting more bang for your health care dollar.

Let me give you an example. Right now if you go to your doctor and you get a test, a lot of times that test won't be forwarded to the next doctor or specialist that you have to see. You have to take another test. You might have to take three or four or five tests by the time your treatment is all completed. That's a waste of money. And if we can incentivize the provider to say, do one test and then e-mail the results to everybody who might be providing treatment or the patient might be referred to, that right there saves a lot of money.

So what we want to do is to do this in Medicare and Medicaid, which will incentivize a lot of health systems around the country to start using some of the smart practices that you're using. Frankly, Medicare and Medicaid is—they provide a lot of care for a lot of patients, particularly seniors, and so if they hear from Medicare, can you start doing things smarter, they have an incentive to do it. And once they put a smarter system in place, the benefits spill over to the private insurance market as well. So we want to do it through Medicare and Medicaid, but we also want to see in the private insurance market that health providers start thinking smarter and providing better care, which often turns out to be lower cost care.

Now, it's not going to happen overnight, because a lot of these systems have been put in place for a long time. And here in Grand Junction or at Mayo Clinic or Geisinger or other of these really good health care systems, what they've done is each year, they are continually comparing notes. They've got a peer review process where doctors are exchanging ideas, and they're continually making the system better and better, smarter and smarter. And over time, what we can do is bend the cost curve so that instead of having inflation go up a lot faster on health care than everything else, it matches everything else.

And if we could do that, if we could just get health care inflation to match the inflation on food and other items, all of our deficit—long-term deficit problems would be solved. Just that alone—if we could just reduce the amount of health care inflation, our long-term debt and deficit problems would be solved.

So this is the most important thing we can do for deficit reduction. And I want everybody to remember that, because in this debate, you've heard a lot of people saying, "We can't afford to do this because our deficits and debt are too high." The biggest driver of our deficit and debt is health care. And if we don't change the delivery systems and adapt some of the innovations that are being used where you work and in really good health care systems around the country, then we're going to be in red ink forever.

Okay? Thank you so much for the question.

All right, gentleman in the red shirt back there. Wait for the mike so everybody can hear you.

Public and Private Health Insurance

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, for taking my question, for one. I've got a bunch, but—my name is Randy Pipher, and I have been in the health insurance business for over 25 years. I'm also a big Steelers fan as well.

The President. I like that in you. The—are you allowed to confess that, though, here, where—[*laughter*]——

Q. I can take it. [*Laughter*]

The President. All right, all right. Good.

Q. You have asked many times why insurance companies are so afraid of competing with a public plan option of coverage. And I understand insurance companies need to get spanked every now and again for sure, but if the public plan option reimburses, on average, 55 cents, by contract, of every dollar of care to the provider,

and the private insurance plans, by contract, reimburse an average of 85 cents per dollar of care, how can it be considered fair competition? And thank you for being here today.

The President. No, I think it's a good question. Thank you. For those of you who have not been following the debate as closely, let me just describe what this issue of the public plan is all about. And to do so, I've got to describe how we're looking to provide health insurance for people who currently don't have it. I spent most of my time talking about what we would do for folks who have health insurance, but we've still got 46 million uninsured, and I think it is the right thing to do to provide them with some help. Most of them work. Most of them are responsible. But their employer—maybe they work for a small business—their employer just can't afford it because they don't have the bargaining power to get low enough rates to cover all their employees. That's a big category of the uninsured.

So what we've said is, let's set up what's called a health insurance exchange. It's essentially a marketplace, where you could go online and you'd have a menu of options, most of them private insurers—Aetna, Blue Cross Blue Shield—insurance companies that wanted to participate, and they would list a range of plans, just like when Mike and Mark want to get health insurance as Members of the Senate, they go on to this exchange for Federal health care—for the Federal employees, and they select which plan works best for their families.

So we want everybody to be able to access that and choose which plan works best for them. And if they can't afford it—even though we'd have a lot of bargaining power, and we'd be able to get the same kinds of rates that really big companies are able to get or the Federal system is able to get, some people will still not be able to afford it—and then we would provide some subsidies. And there would be certain rules governing any insurance company that's participating: You couldn't exclude for preexisting conditions; you couldn't have a lifetime cap; you'd have to limit out-of-pocket expenses. So all the insurance rules that I talked about, that would be part of the deal if you as an insurer wanted to sell insurance through this exchange.

So far, so good. The argument around public option is, should one of the choices—not the only choice, but one of the choices on that exchange—be a public option? And the idea here would be that a government-run non-for-profit would have its own option that people could sign up for—they wouldn't have to, but they could sign up for it—and if it could keep its costs lower and provide a good, quality service and good benefits, then that would help keep the insurance companies honest, because the idea being that as a non-for-profit, potentially with lower administrative costs, they could do a good job.

Now, the insurance companies have come back and said, well, that's not fair, because nobody can compete against the government. They have a legitimate point if—if what's being done is the government is either subsidizing that government plan, essentially taking taxpayer money and saying, here, we'll just keep on spending money regardless of whether you run a good operation or not, then it's hard for insurance companies to compete against that. And by the way, it would be wildly expensive for taxpayers. So I've already said a public option can only work if they have to collect premiums just like a private insurer and compete on a level playing field. That's point number one.

The second argument that's been made is the one that you just made, which is, if public option is reimbursing at Medicaid rates that are substantially lower than what private insurers have to negotiate for, then eventually, over time, private insurers might be run out of business. So that's the second argument.

Now, what's happened in the House bill that—as it's been modified, is they've actually said, we're going to negotiate rates; they won't be Medicaid rates. So that actually solves the problem that you're addressing, because now they—this would be a negotiated process, and prices would not be set just to Medicaid. All right?

Now, there's a third argument against the public option, and this is the one, really, that you've been hearing mostly about, and that is

just this idea that we shouldn't have government involved at all, that government is part of the problem, not part of the solution, to quote Ronald Reagan. [*Applause*] We've got some supporters of that view. And I guess the only—look, I think you can have a legitimate position just saying you don't want to see more government involvement. I understand the argument. The only thing I would point out is, is that Medicare is a government program that works really well for our seniors and has protected people—[*applause*]—hold on one second, let's not start yelling.

It's true that it's expensive, but the truth is that actually the cost of Medicare inflation has actually gone up at a slower rate than private insurance. So it's not because it's mismanaged, it's because of what was referred to in the first question. The whole health care system is out of whack and way too expensive. It's not government, per se. It has to do with the fact that the health care system itself, the delivery systems are not working the way they should.

So if you just believe the government shouldn't be involved in anything, or shouldn't be involved in health care, period, then you're right that you can't support the kind of reform that we're proposing. The only thing I want to make sure of, though, is you've got to—you make an honest argument, because nobody is talking about government takeover of health care. There's a difference between what we're proposing, which has some government involvement, versus this idea that somehow government is going to take over everything and get between you and your doctor. That's not what we're proposing.

So we can have an honest disagreement, but I just want to be clear on what the debate is about. It's about this narrow issue of the public plan. It's not about somehow eliminating private insurance. Everybody who has currently private insurance that works for them will be able to keep private insurance under the proposals that have been made in Congress. All right?

Okay, it's a woman's turn. It's a young lady's turn. Let me—right there with the vest. Yes, that's you. [*Laughter*]

Reporting and Reducing Preventable Medical Errors

Q. Hello, Mr. President, and thanks for being here.

The President. Thank you.

Q. My name is Jamie Way, and I am a nursing student at Mesa State.

The President. Outstanding.

Q. I'm very excited. Being as I am a potential health care provider in the health care system, there are a few things in the plan that I read about that I wanted to understand more——

The President. Sure.

Q. ——as far as providers being required to report—what was the words—preventable medical errors in the health care system. Now, as far as health care systems are concerned, we are required to report every error we see. So I kind of want a clarification of how much you're expecting from providers in this system.

The President. Well, different States have different rules, so we've got kind of a patchwork. I don't—I confess I don't know exactly what the rules are here in Colorado. But about 100,000 people die every year from preventable diseases and illnesses in hospitals. Some of the ways that we could solve this are so simple. There's actually a doctor who's put together a protocol—washing your hands, a lot of just basic stuff that costs no money—that has been shown repeatedly to cut these preventable illnesses and deaths down drastically, by a magnitude of 50 percent, 75 percent reductions in preventable deaths just by applying these things that don't cost any money.

So the question then becomes, how do we get more hospitals, more doctors, more health systems, to adopt these systems? And the best way to do it is to make sure that not only are they reporting these preventable errors, but that they're also available to consumers, the American people, so that if they've got too many of them, after a while they start getting embarrassed, right? I mean, if you found out that there are two hospitals here in this city and one hospital has half the preventable deaths of the other hospital, you'd want to know that, wouldn't you?

The problem is, right now, oftentimes, it's very hard for consumers to get that information directly. So the idea is simply to make sure that that information is packaged in a way where you can comparison shop and your employer—if you're getting health insurance through your employer—can comparison shop, so that we're putting some competitive pressure to improve quality across the system. That's what we're talking about.

By the way, thank you for being a nurse, because we need more nurses. That's important.

All right, gentleman right here in the T-shirt. Hold on one second, we got a mike coming.

Realistic Health Care Reform/Misinformation Concerning Health Care Reform

Q. Thank you for coming to Colorado. It's a great place.

The President. It's a great place.

Q. I would—you touched on this; I would like you to expand a little more. This problem with misinformation in our country, it seems to me that it's not only just hurting health care reform, health insurance reform, it's dividing our country. Is it not maybe time—I think we all know where it's coming from. Is it not time that something can be done—okay, I got to watch what I'm saying, but——

The President. Well, look, let me—let me just—let me address this. You know, health care is really hard. I mean, this is not easy. I'm a reasonably dedicated student to this issue. I've got a lot of really smart people around me who have been working on this for months now. We've got really fine public servants like Senators Bennet and Udall who are working on this and thinking about it a lot.

And the truth is—I want to be completely honest here—there is no perfect, painless silver bullet out there that solves every problem, gives everybody perfect health care for free. There isn't. I wish it was—I wish there was. I wish I could just say, you know what, we're going to change the system, everybody will get as much care as they want any time they want, everybody will have it, and it won't cost anything. And doctors will be happy, and nurses will be happy; hospitals will be happy; insurance companies will still make a lot of profits; drug companies will be able to charge as much as they want. I can't do it. Nobody can.

What I can do is try to sort through what are all the options available, be realistic about where we're going on health care, say to myself, if we keep on doing what we're doing, we are in a world of hurt. We can't afford what we're doing right now. More people are going to lose health insurance. More employers are going to drop coverage or push more coverage onto their employees with higher premiums and higher deductibles. Medicare and Medicaid will go broke. State budgets and Federal budgets will be unsustainable.

And then we're going to have to make some really bad decisions, where we have no good options—even worse options than we have right now. And what's going to end up happening is—mark my words—if we do nothing, at some point, Medicare in about 8 to 9 years goes into the red. Somebody mentioned it's going broke; yes, it is going broke.

So here's what's going to happen if we don't change the delivery systems and change some of the incentives: We'll have a choice. We'll either have to cut Medicare, in which case seniors then will bear the brunt of it, or we'll have to raise taxes, which nobody likes. And we still will be paying about five to six thousand dollars more than any other advanced country in the world and not get better health care for it. Now, that doesn't make sense.

So in terms of misinformation, there is—because there's no perfect solution, we can have legitimate debates about the public option that we just had. That was a good, serious debate, and you can make a plausible argument as to why we shouldn't have a public option. Now, I believe that we should—on balance. It's not perfect. It's not going to solve every problem, but I think it actually would keep the insurance companies more honest. You can have a honest disagreement with me on that.

What you can't do—or you can, but you shouldn't do—[*laughter*]—is start saying things like, we want to set up death panels to pull the plug on grandma. I mean, come on. I mean, I just—first of all, when you make a comment like that—I just lost my grandmother

last year. I know what it's like to watch somebody you love, who's aging, deteriorate and have to struggle with that. So the notion that somehow I ran for public office or Members of Congress are in this so that they can go around pulling the plug on grandma? I mean, when you start making arguments like that, that's simply dishonest, especially when I hear the arguments coming from Members of Congress in the other party who, turns out, sponsored similar provisions.

I mean, here's what this was about. Here was the genesis of this little piece of information. We had a provision in the House bill that would give the option—the option—of somebody getting counseling on end-of-life care or hospice care and have it reimbursed by Medicare, the option—voluntary—so you'd have more information about how to deal with these situations.

Turns out, the biggest proponent of this was a Republican Congressman who is now a Senator and a colleague of Mr. Udall and Mr. Bennet. Turns out, in Medicare Part D, which was passed by a Republican Congress, they had the exact same provision.

So when I have people who just a couple of years ago thought this was a good idea now getting on television suggesting that it's a plot against grandma or to sneak euthanasia into our health care system, that feels dishonest to me. And we've got enough stuff to deal with without having these kinds of arguments.

All right, so it's—all right, it's a woman's turn here. Yes, I've sort of neglected this area right here. Young lady right there, blond hair, black blouse—black dress. Yes, right there. Go ahead.

Cost of Health Care Reform/Health Insurance for Small Businesses

Q. Thank you. Hi, my name is Julie, and I'm a small-business owner from Colorado Springs. I am also a Republican that voted for you.

The President. Thank you.

Q. You're welcome.

The President. What's your business?

Q. We make software.

The President. Excellent. We need that. [*Laughter*]

Q. I hope so. So I grew up in a blue-collar family, and my husband and I work very hard at our small business. We've always treated our employees like family, given them great benefits, any time off they need with their family. I volunteer in my professional community. I volunteer at my children's schools. And that's still not enough, because us small-business owners that are on that cusp between middle class and the rich are going to bear the brunt of a lot of what this is going to cost. Why is what I do now not enough?

The President. Let me—I think it's a good question. Let me talk about both cost and what this would mean for small businesses, because both issues would affect you.

First of all, remember what I said: I can't come up with a perfect solution that is completely free. It is absolutely true that in order for us to provide help to those who have no insurance at all, that's going to cost some money. It's going to cost some money. We can't do it for free. They've got no health insurance right now; we're going to help them. It's 46 million people. That's going to cost some money.

Now, what I've proposed is going to cost roughly $900 billion, 800 to 900. That's a lot of money. Keep in mind it's over 10 years. So when you hear some of these figures thrown out there, this is not per year; this is over 10 years. So let's assume it's about $80 billion a year. It turns out that about two-thirds of that could be paid for by eliminating waste in the existing system.

So I'll give you—let me give you one particular example. We right now provide $177 billion over 10 years, or about 17, 18 billion dollars a year, to insurance companies in the forms of subsidies for something called Medicare Advantage, where they basically run the Medicare program that everybody else has, except they get an extra bunch of money that they make a big profit off of. And there's no proof, no evidence at all that seniors are better off using Medicare Advantage than regular Medicare. If we could save that $18 billion a year, that is money that we can use to help people who right now need some help. So about two-thirds of what we're talking about is paid for through the existing health care system, money that's already being paid by taxpayers, does not require additional taxes. But that still leaves one-third.

Now, in order to pay for that, there have been a lot of proposals out there. One of them that I proposed, I still think is the best idea. You may disagree, because I don't know what your income bracket is. My proposal was that for people making more than $250,000 a year, people like myself, that we should, instead of getting the full itemized deduction of what our highest tax bracket is, we should just cap out our itemized deduction at 28 percent, which is what the average American gets. So—because my attitude is, I shouldn't get a bigger tax break if I write a check to my local church than if the janitor down the street writes a check to their local church. We should get the same tax break. If we were willing to do that, just that alone would pay for what we're talking about.

Now, some Members of Congress disagree with that, and they've got other proposals. And that's going to be worked out in September. I do want to make the point, though, that I have not proposed any plan that would put the burden on middle class families in order to deal with this. So when you hear people talking about I'm raising your taxes, the only tax policies I've implemented for middle class families is a tax cut for 95 percent of working families.

Now, let me talk about small businesses. I don't know your particular situation, whether you're providing health insurance right now to your employees. If you are, then you stand to benefit from this plan, because every proposal, both in the House and the Senate, that's been put forward provides a huge number of subsidies to small-business owners that are doing the right thing by their employees.

So it is very likely—you know, obviously, we'd have to look at the calculations; I'd have to figure out how many employees you have, what kind of health insurance plan you have, et cetera—but it is very likely that you would actually make money, gain from this plan, because you're already providing health insurance to your employees, and we would give you some help.

The only category of folks who might not like this plan are employers who can afford to provide health insurance to their employees but aren't doing so, because what we would then say to them—what we'd say to them is, look, we're giving you affordable options; you are going to be able now to be part of a bigger pool. You can buy your health insurance through that exchange that I was explaining to that gentleman there. So you'll be able to get premiums and prices that are comparable to what big companies—Xerox or IBM—are getting for their employees, and we'll give you some help doing it. But if you refuse to provide any health insurance for your employees at all, then we are going to ask you to make a contribution to help make sure those employees have health insurance, because by the way, it turns out, if you as an employer are not providing that health insurance, the rest of us are, because those folks are going on Medicaid, or they're going to the hospitals for uncompensated care, and that's not fair.

So the bottom line is this: If you are a small-business person who is providing health insurance for your employees, I am very sure that you would actually benefit from this. But the problem is—again, this is where the information has not been going out in as clear a fashion as possible, which is why I'm glad you asked the question.

All right? Okay.

All right, I'm going to call on this gentleman because he's been waving, and he's shouted at me for—a couple of times, so I just want to—I just want proof here that we're—I'm happy to get a good debate going.

Public and Private Health Insurance

Q. How are you doing, Mr. President?

The President. I'm good. What's your name?

Q. My name is Zach Lahn. I'm a student at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

The President. Good to talk to you, Zach. What do you study?

Q. Political science and business marketing.

The President. Fantastic. All right, what's your question?

Q. My question is this—and also, I'd love to have a debate, just all out, any time, Oxford-style, if you'd like. [*Laughter*] I understand—I'm willing to do that. But my question is this. We all know the best way to reduce prices in this economy is to increase

competition. How in the world can a private corporation providing insurance compete with an entity that does not have to worry about making a profit, does not have to pay local property taxes—they do not have to—they're not subject to local regulations? How can a company compete with that? And I'm not looking for anything—I don't want generalities. I don't want philosophical arguments. I'm just asking a question.

The President. That's a great question. Thank you for the question.

Now, I just want to point out that I partially answered the question earlier by explaining that certainly they can't compete if the taxpayer is standing behind the public option just shoveling more and more money at it, right? That's certainly not fair. And so I've already said I would not be in favor of a public option of that sort because that would just mean more expenses out of our pockets, and we wouldn't be seeing much improvement in quality.

It is true that there are certain costs associated with a private business that a government would not have to worry about; you mentioned a couple of them. It's not just, by the way, property taxes; it's also things like just the cost of capital. In terms of the cost of borrowing, a public option—insurance companies have to have a lot of money on hand, and it's conceivable that a private entity that's having to pay a certain interest rate for their money would be really undermined if the government is able to get money much cheaper implicitly because Uncle Sam backs this operation.

So that's why I say this is actually a legitimate debate. I think that we can craft a system in which you've got a public option that has to operate independently, not subsidized by taxpayers. It would be nonprofit—but we've already got nonprofits out there like Blue Cross Blue Shield—that they would have to go on the market and get a market price for capital, so they wouldn't be able to just have the Federal Reserve write them a check. I think there are ways that we can address those competitive issues. And you're absolutely right; if they're not entirely addressed, then that raises a set of legitimate problems.

But I—the only point I wanted to make was the notion that somehow, just by having a public option, you have the entire private marketplace destroyed is just not borne out by the facts. And in fact, right now you've got a lot of private companies who do very well competing against the Government. UPS and FedEx are doing a lot better than the post office. No, they are. And so I—but the larger point I want to make, and I'm—it's good to see a young person who's very engaged and confident challenging the President to a Oxford-style debate; I think this is good. You know, the—this is good. You know, I like that. You got to have a little chutzpah, you know.

This is a legitimate debate to have. All I'm saying is, though, that the public option, whether we have it or we don't have it, is not the entirety of health care reform. This is just one sliver of it, one aspect of it. And by the way, it's both the right and the left that have become so fixated on this that they forget everything else, like the fact that we can help Nathan make sure that he doesn't suddenly find himself completely broke in trying to treat his son.

So we are working on a series of proposals to address the questions that you're raising. I believe that we can work them out. But those are specific questions, as opposed to broad, philosophical questions about whether government ever has a role to play or not.

Keep in mind, finally—and this is the last point that I'll make—that you have a bunch of countries that have systems in which government is involved but you still have a thriving private insurance market, the Netherlands being a good example. Everybody is covered. Everybody has care. The Government has regulations in there. But it does not somehow take over the entire private insurance market. So I just want people to understand, nobody is talking about a Government takeover of health care. I want to repeat that one last time.

All right. I've got—I've got one last—I've got time for one last question. I'm going to call on this young lady right here. Oops, she just lost her question. Go ahead. Who's got a microphone? Right here, right here.

Importance of Health Care Reform

Q. I cannot believe that we have the President of the United States of America in Grand Junction, Colorado.

The President. Good to be here.

Q. We are so proud of you.

The President. Thank you.

Q. My name is Maria Elena Wells, and I live in the Western Slope in Montrose, Colorado. And I am a naturalized citizen, and I am proud to be an American in this beautiful land.

The President. Thank you.

Q. I—as a child, I had polio, and I had a series of surgeries, 52 of them, to correct my poor structure of bones, between here, Denver, Montrose, and the Mayo Clinic in Phoenix, Arizona. I have been blessed with a good insurance, generally excellent doctors and care. However, my major concern in cost, even with good—and even with a good insurance, our cost has been high, practically when I have been gone out of the network. Why should our doctor treatments choice be limited by a geographic area or the State? What kind of competition is this, Mr. President?

The President. Okay, all right.

Q. Thank you.

The President. This raises an important question, because it goes to the overall debate that's taking place out there right now. When we talk about reform, you hear some opponents of reform saying that somehow we are trying to ration care or restrict the doctors that you can see or you name it. Well, that's what's going on right now. It's just that the decisions are being made by the insurance companies.

Now, in fairness, we probably could not construct a system in which you could see any doctor anywhere in the world anytime, regardless of expense. I mean, that would be a hard system to set up. So if you live in Maine, you know, we're going to fly you into California, put you up. I mean, you can see—and I'm not trying to make light of it—you can just see the difficulty.

So any system we design, there are going to be some choices that have to be made in terms of where you go to see your doctor, what's going on, et cetera. That's being done currently in the private marketplace. All we're trying to do is to make sure that those decisions that are being made in the private marketplace aren't discriminating against people because they're already sick, that they are making sure that people get a good deal from the health care dollars that they are spending.

So let's make sure, for example, that if you go to a hospital, you get one of those operations that you discussed, and it turns out that 2 weeks later, you've got to be readmitted because they didn't do it right the first time, that the hospital has to pay some penalty for that, or at least they're not being reimbursed as much as a hospital who gets it right the first time. That's an example of changing incentives that can save us money.

The more that we make those kinds of changes that improve quality, reduce cost, the more likely it is that more Americans have more options and that they are not being jerked around. It doesn't mean that everything is going to be perfect, but it does mean that consumers will have more choices, better options, more security, more protection.

That's all we're trying to accomplish here, and we're trying to do it in a way that over time reduces costs overall for families, whether you're getting Medicare or you're getting Medicaid or you've got private insurance through your employer or you're a small-business owner. That's what we're trying to accomplish.

And I am confident that we can accomplish it, but we're going to have to work hard to do it. And we're going to have to overcome some of the wrong information; we're going to have to have an honest debate. Nothing is going to be perfect. We're going to have to make sure—this is something, by the way, that people need to understand: Even if everything goes perfectly and we pass legislation, let's say, in October, we're still going to have another 3 months of debate about this; then we're still going to have several years of implementation. It's not going to happen overnight. We're going to have to set up these reforms and these processes, and we're going to have to give insurance companies a chance to adjust, because, for example, if we don't have everybody

covered, we can't construct a system that prevents insurance companies from discriminating against preexisting conditions. I hope everybody understands that.

We can't tell insurers to take everybody if, on the other hand, you've got a whole bunch of people who are healthy and young who choose not to get insurance at all, because what ends up happening is then insurance companies are just going to take the people when they get sick. Somebody won't buy insurance until they find out that they're sick. Then they go into the insurance office and they say, give me insurance so I can go pay my bill. Insurance companies would lose money pretty quick that way. So if we're going to eliminate the preexisting conditions problem, we've got to also have the coverage problem, and that's why this is going to have to be phased in over a number of years.

Last point I want to make, and this has to do with the budget issues, because we've got a huge deficit right now and a huge debt, and I think that that's coloring how people view the debate. I hear a lot of people saying, how can we afford this right now? We've got to reduce our deficit.

First, I want everybody to understand the source of our deficit, because if you don't understand that, then my argument won't make sense. When I walked into the White House, I had gift-wrapped, waiting for me at the door, a $1.3 trillion deficit—$1.3 trillion. Now, I say that—I just want to—I say that—this was not—and this is not, by the way, entirely the previous administration's fault. The financial crisis was so bad that revenues plummeted and all this money was spent in making sure that the banking system did not completely collapse. So all the actions that have been taken—the bank bailout, the auto bailout, all that stuff—that did spike the deficit.

But the problem actually is not that—you know, the extraordinary steps that we've taken over these last 1 or 2 years; the real problem is much longer. Even if we had had no fiscal crisis whatsoever, we have a structural deficit. We're spending more money than we are taking in. We've been doing it for the last 8 years. When we passed the prescription drug benefit for Medicare, by a Republican Congress, they didn't pay for it. They didn't want to raise taxes, but they wanted to get the benefit. That just was red ink. That just went into our structural deficit.

When we fought the Iraq war, we made that decision. We didn't pay for it. When we cut taxes on some of the wealthiest Americans, we did not compensate by making cuts in programs that were comparable. So what that has all added up to is, we've got a structural deficit that over the course of the next 10 years is about $9 trillion.

Now, I say that because I just want everybody to understand, if we're going to tackle that problem, the only way we can do it in an intelligent way is if we get control of Medicare and Medicaid spending in some realistic way. If we don't do that, we can't simply cut our way out of the problem or tax our way out of the problem.

I ask sometimes, when I'm in audiences, what people think the amount of Federal budget is devoted to foreign aid. And people will say 25 percent; if we could just cut that out, we could eliminate the deficit. Foreign aid is 1 percent of our budget—1 percent. People think, well, it's all these pork projects and earmarks that everybody is getting—1 percent. Almost all of our spending is Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, interest on the national debt, defense spending, things that are very hard to cut.

Only about 30 percent of the overall budget— somewhere between 25 and 30 percent—is nondefense discretionary spending. That's everything for national parks, for education, you name it. Every single program that you think of that you think of as a Government program, that is only about 25 percent of the budget. The rest of it is all Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid. And what's really going up fastest is Medicare and Medicaid.

So I just want everybody to understand, if you are a fiscal hawk, if you are a deficit hawk, and you are tired of this crazy spending in Washington, and you want to finally make sure that we are looking out for the next generation, then you, more than anybody, should want to reform the health care system, because if we don't do it, we can't solve that problem.

Thank you, Grand Junction. Love you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:44 p.m. at Central High School. In his remarks, he referred to Nathan Wilkes, principal network architect, Virtela Communications, Inc., who introduced the President, his wife Sonji, and their son Thomas; Tilman Bishop, vice chair of the board of regents, University of Colorado; and Sen. Johnny Isakson.

Remarks at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Convention in Phoenix, Arizona
August 17, 2009

Thank you. Please, be seated. Thank you so much. Commander Gardner, thank you for your introduction and for your lifetime of service. I was proud to welcome Glen and your executive director, Bob Wallace, to the Oval Office just before the Fourth of July, and I look forwarding to working with your next commander, Tommy Tradewell. I want to also acknowledge Jean Gardner and Sharon Tradewell, as well as Dixie Hild and Jan Tittle and all the spouses and family of the Ladies Auxiliary. America honors your service as well.

Also Governor Jan Brewer is here, of Arizona, and Mayor Phil Gordon, our host here in Phoenix. I want to acknowledge President—Dr. Joe Shirley, Jr., President of the Navajo Nation. And this wasn't on my original card, but this is just an extraordinary story. And you may have already heard from her, but I just want to publicly acknowledge and thank Ms. Helen Denton, the secretary to Dwight Eisenhower, who typed up the orders for the Normandy invasion and is here today, and what an extraordinary story that is.

Members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I am honored and humbled to stand before you as Commander in Chief of the finest military the world has ever known. And we're joined by some of those who make it the finest force in the world, from Luke Air Force Base, members of the 56th Fighter Wing.

Whether you wear the uniform today or wore it decades ago, you remind us of a fundamental truth: It's not the powerful weapons that make our military the strongest in the world. It's not the sophisticated systems that make us the most advanced. The true strength of our military lies in the spirit and skill of our men and women in uniform. And you know this.

You know this because it's the story of your lives. When fascism seemed unstoppable and our harbor was bombed, you battled across rocky Pacific islands and stormed the beaches of Europe, marching across a continent—my own grandfather and uncle among your ranks—liberating millions and turning enemies into allies.

When communism cast its shadow across so much of the globe, you stood vigilant in a long cold war, from an airlift in Berlin to the mountains of Korea to the jungles of Vietnam. When that cold war ended and old hatreds emerged anew, you turned back aggression from Kuwait to Kosovo.

And long after you took off the uniform, you've continued to serve: supporting our families, our troops when they go to war and welcoming them when they come home; working to give our veterans the care they deserve; and when America's heroes are laid to rest, giving every one of them that final fitting tribute of a grateful nation. We can never say it enough: For your service in war and peace, thank you VFW. Thank you.

Today, the story of your service is carried on by a new generation, dedicated, courageous men and women who I have the privilege to lead and meet every day.

They're the young sailors, the midshipmen at the Naval Academy, who raised their right hand at graduation and committed themselves to a life of service. They're the soldiers I met in Baghdad who have done their duty, year after year, on a second, third, or fourth tour. They're the marines of Camp Lejeune, preparing to deploy and now serving in Afghanistan to protect Americans here at home. They're the airmen, like those here today, who provide the close air support that saves the lives of our troops on the ground. They're the wounded warriors at Landstuhl and Walter Reed and Bethesda and across America for whom the battle is not to fight, but simply to

speak, to stand, to walk once more. They're the families that my wife Michelle has met at bases across the country: the spouses back home doing the parenting of two; the children who wonder when mom and dad may be coming home; the parents who watch their sons and daughters go off to war; and the families who lay a loved one to rest, and the pain that lasts a lifetime.

To all those who have served America, our forces, your families, our veterans, you have done your duty. You have fulfilled your responsibilities, and now a grateful nation must fulfill ours. And that is what I want to talk about today.

First, we have a solemn responsibility to always lead our men and women in uniform wisely. And that starts with a vision of American leadership that recognizes that military power alone cannot be the first or only answer to the threats facing our Nation.

In recent years, our troops have succeeded in every mission America has given them, from toppling the Taliban to deposing a dictator in Iraq to battling brutal insurgencies. At the same time, forces trained for war have been called upon to perform a whole host of missions. Like mayors, they've run local governments and delivered water and electricity. Like aid workers, they've mentored farmers and built new schools. Like diplomats, they've negotiated agreements with tribal sheikhs and local leaders.

But let us never forget: We are a country of more than 300 million Americans; less than 1 percent wears the uniform. And that 1 percent—our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coastguardsmen—have borne the overwhelming burden of our security. In fact, perhaps never in American history have so few protected so many.

So the responsibility for our security must not be theirs alone. That is why I have made it a priority to enlist all elements of our national power in defense of our national security—our diplomacy and development, our economic might and our moral example—because one of the best ways to lead our troops wisely is to prevent the conflicts that cost American blood and treasure tomorrow.

As President, my greatest responsibility is the security and safety of the American people. As I've said before, that is the first thing I think about when I wake up in the morning, it's the last thing that I think about when I go to sleep at night. And I will not hesitate to use force to protect the American people or our vital interests.

But as we protect America, our men and women in uniform must always be treated as what they are, America's most precious resource. As Commander in Chief, I have a solemn responsibility for their safety. And there is nothing more sobering than signing a letter of condolence to the family of service men or women who have given their lives for our country.

And that's why I have made this pledge to our Armed Forces: I will only send you into harm's way when it is absolutely necessary. And when I do, it will be based on good intelligence and guided by a sound strategy. I will give you a clear mission, defined goals, and the equipment and support you need to get the job done. That's my commitment to you.

Which brings me to our second responsibility to our Armed Forces: giving them the resources and equipment and strategies to meet their missions. We need to keep our military the best trained, the best led, the best equipped fighting force in the world. And that's why, even with our current economic challenges, my budget increases defense spending.

We will ensure that we have the force structure to meet today's missions. And that's why we've increased the size of the Army and the Marine Corps 2 years ahead of schedule and have approved another temporary increase in the Army. And we've halted personnel reductions in the Navy and Air Force. And this will give our troops more time home between deployments, which means less stress on families and more training for the next mission. And it will help us put an end, once and for all, to stop-loss for those who've done their duty.

We will equip our forces with the assets and technologies they need to fight and win. So my budget funds more of the Army helicopters, crews, and pilots urgently needed in Afghanistan; the intelligence, surveillance, and

reconnaissance that gives our troops the advantage; the special operations forces that can deploy on a moment's notice; and for all those serving in Afghanistan and Iraq, including our National Guard and Reserve, more of the protective gear and armored vehicles that save lives.

As we fight in two wars, we will plan responsibly, budget honestly, and speak candidly about the costs and consequences of our actions. And that's why I've made sure my budget includes the costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In Iraq, after more than 6 years, we took an important step forward in June. We transferred control of all cities and towns to Iraq's security forces. The transition to full Iraqi responsibility for their own security is now underway. This progress is a testament to all those who have served in Iraq, both uniformed and civilian. And our Nation owes these Americans, and all who have given their lives, a profound debt of gratitude.

Now, as Iraqis take control of their destiny, they will be tested and targeted. Those who seek to sow sectarian division will attempt more senseless bombings and more killing of innocents. This we know.

But as we move forward, the Iraqi people must know that the United States will keep its commitments. And the American people must know that we will move forward with our strategy. We will begin removing our combat brigades from Iraq later this year. We will remove all our combat brigades by the end of next August. And we will remove all our troops from Iraq by the end of 2011. And for America, the Iraq war will end.

By moving forward in Iraq, we're able to refocus on the war against Al Qaida and its extremist allies in Afghanistan and Pakistan. That's why I announced a new, comprehensive strategy in March, a strategy that recognizes that Al Qaida and its allies had moved their base from the remote, tribal areas—to the remote, tribal areas of Pakistan. This strategy acknowledges that military power alone will not win this war, that we also need diplomacy and development and good governance. And our new strategy has a clear mission and defined goals: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida and its extremist allies.

In the months since, we have begun to put this comprehensive strategy into action. And in recent weeks, we've seen our troops do their part. They've gone into new areas, taking the fight to the Taliban in villages and towns where residents have been terrorized for years. They're adapting new tactics, knowing that it's not enough to kill extremists and terrorists; we also need to protect the Afghan people and improve their daily lives. And today, our troops are helping to secure polling places for this week's election so that Afghans can choose the future that they want.

Now, these new efforts have not been without a price. The fighting has been fierce. More Americans have given their lives. And as always, the thoughts and prayers of every American are with those who make the ultimate sacrifice in our defense.

As I said when I announced this strategy, there will be more difficult days ahead. The insurgency in Afghanistan didn't just happen overnight, and we won't defeat it overnight. This will not be quick, nor easy. But we must never forget this is not a war of choice, this is a war of necessity. Those who attacked America on 9/11 are plotting to do so again. If left unchecked, the Taliban insurgency will mean an even larger safe haven from which Al Qaida would plot to kill more Americans. So this is not only a war worth fighting, this is a—this is fundamental to the defense of our people.

And going forward, we will constantly adapt to new tactics to stay ahead of the enemy and give our troops the tools and equipment they need to succeed. And at every step of the way, we will assess our efforts to defeat Al Qaida and its extremist allies and to help the Afghan and Pakistani people build the future that they seek.

Now, even as we lead and equip our troops for the missions of today, we have a third responsibility to fulfill. We must prepare our forces for the missions of tomorrow. Our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coastguardsmen adapt to new challenges every day. But as we know, much of our defense establishment has yet to fully adapt to the post-cold

war world, with doctrine and weapons better suited to fight the Soviets on the plains of Europe than insurgents in the rugged terrain of Afghanistan. Twenty years after the cold war ended, this is simply not acceptable. It's irresponsible. Our troops and our taxpayers deserve better.

And that's why our defense review is taking a top-to-bottom look at our priorities and posture, questioning conventional wisdom, rethinking old dogmas, and challenging the status quo. We're asking hard questions about the forces we need and the weapons we buy. And when we're finished, we'll have a new blueprint for the 21st-century military that we need. And in fact, we're already on our way.

We're adopting new concepts because the full spectrum of challenges demands a full range of military capabilities, both the conventional and the unconventional: the ability to defeat both an armored division and the lone suicide bomber, the intercontinental ballistic missile and the improvised explosive device, 18th-century-style piracy and 21st-century cyber threats. No matter the mission, we must maintain America's military dominance.

So even as we modernize our conventional forces, we're investing in the capabilities that will reorient our force to the future: an Army that's more mobile and expeditionary and missile defenses that protect our troops in the field; a Navy that not only projects power across the oceans, but operates nimbly in shallow, coastal waters; an Air Force that dominates the airspace with next-generation aircraft, both manned and unmanned; a Marine Corps that can move ashore more rapidly in more places.

And across the force, we're investing in new skills and specialties, because in the 21st century, military strength will be measured not only by the weapons our troops carry, but by the languages they speak and the cultures that they understand. But here's the simple truth: We cannot build the 21st-century military we need and maintain the fiscal responsibility that America demands unless we fundamentally reform the way our defense establishment does business. It's a simple fact. Every dollar wasted in our defense budget is a dollar we can't spend to care for our troops or protect America or prepare for the future.

You've heard the stories: the indefensible no-bid contracts that cost taxpayers billions and make contractors rich, the special interests and their exotic projects that are years behind schedule and billions over budget, the entrenched lobbyists pushing weapons that even our military says it doesn't want. The impulse in Washington to protect jobs back home building things we don't need has a cost that we can't afford.

This waste would be unacceptable at any time, but at a time when we're fighting two wars and facing a serious deficit, it's inexcusable. It's an affront to the American people and to our troops, and it's time for it to stop.

And this is not a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. This is not a Democratic issue or a Republican issue; it's about giving our troops the support that they need. And that's something that all Americans should be able to agree to. So I'm glad I have as a partner in this effort, a great veteran, a great Arizonan, and a great American who has shown the courage to stand and fight this waste, Senator John McCain. And I'm also proud to have Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who has served under eight Presidents of both parties, leading this fight at the Pentagon.

So already I've put an end to unnecessary no-bid contracts. I've signed bipartisan legislation to reform defense procurement so weapons systems don't spin out of control. And even as we increase spending on the equipment and weapons our troops do need, we've proposed cutting tens of billions of dollars in waste we don't need.

Think about it: hundreds of millions of dollars for an alternate second engine for the Joint Strike Fighter when one reliable engine will do just fine; nearly $2 billion to buy more F–22 fighter jets when we can move ahead with a fleet of newer, more affordable aircraft; tens of billions of dollars to put an antimissile laser on a fleet of vulnerable 747s; and billions of dollars for a new Presidential helicopter—now, maybe you've heard about this—among its other capabilities, it would let me cook a meal while under nuclear attack. [*Laughter*] Now, let me tell you

something, if the United States of America is under nuclear attack, the last thing on my mind will be whipping up a snack. [*Laughter*]

So this is pretty straightforward: Cut the waste, save taxpayer dollars, support the troops. That's what we should be doing. The special interests, contractors, and entrenched lobbyists, they're invested in the status quo, and they're putting up a fight. But make no mistake, so are we. If a project doesn't support our troops, if it does not make America safer, we will not fund it. If a system doesn't perform, we will terminate it. And if Congress sends me a defense bill loaded with a bunch of pork, I will veto it. We will do right by our troops and taxpayers, and we will build the 21st-century military that we need.

Finally, we will fulfill our responsibility to those who serve by keeping our promises to our people. We will fulfill our responsibility to our forces and our families. That's why we're increasing military pay. That's why we're building better family housing and funding more childcare and counseling to help families cope with the stresses of war. And we've changed the rules so military spouses can better compete for Federal jobs and pursue their careers.

We will fulfill our responsibility to our wounded warriors. For those still in uniform, we're investing billions of dollars for more treatment centers, more case managers, and better medical care so our troops can recover and return where they want to be, with their units.

But as the VFW well knows, for so many veterans, the war rages on: the flashbacks that won't go away, the loved ones who now seem like strangers, the heavy darkness of depression that has led to too many of our troops taking their own lives. Posttraumatic stress and traumatic brain injury are the defining injuries of today's wars. So caring for those affected by them is a defining purpose of my budget—billions of dollars more for treatment and mental health screenings to reach our troops on the frontier—on the frontlines and more mobile and rural clinics to reach veterans back home. We are not going to abandon these American heroes. We are going to do right by them.

We will fulfill our responsibility to our veterans as they return to civilian life. I was proud to cosponsor the post-9/11 GI bill as a Senator. And thanks to VFW members across the country and leaders like Arizona's Harry Mitchell in Congress, it is now the law of the land. And as President, I'm committed to seeing that it is successfully implemented.

For so many of you, like my grandfather, the original GI bill changed your life, helping you to realize your dreams. But it also transformed America, helping to build the largest middle class in history. We're saying the same thing to today's post-9/11 veterans: You pick the school; we'll help pick up the bill.

And as these veterans show—start showing up on campuses, I'm proud that we're making this opportunity available to all those who have sacrificed, including Reservists and National Guard members and spouses and children, including kids who've lost their mom or dad. In an era when so many people and institutions have acted irresponsibly, we choose to reward the responsibility and service of our forces and their families.

Whether you've left the service in 2009 or 1949, we will fulfill our responsibility to deliver the benefits and care that you earned. And that's why I've pledged to build nothing less than a 21st-century VA. And I picked a lifelong soldier and wounded warrior from Vietnam to lead this fight, General Ric Shinseki.

We're dramatically increasing funding for veterans health care. This includes hundreds of millions of dollars to serve veterans in rural areas, as well as the unique needs of our growing number of women veterans. We're restoring access to VA health care for a half a million veterans who lost their eligibility in recent years, our Priority 8 veterans.

And since there's been so much misinformation out there about health insurance reform, let me say this: One thing that reform won't change is veterans' health care. No one is going to take away your benefits; that is the plain and simple truth. We're expanding access to your health care, not reducing it.

We're also keeping our promise on concurrent receipt. My budget ensures that our severely disabled veterans will receive both their

military retired pay and their VA disability benefits. And I look forward to signing legislation on advanced appropriations for the VA so the medical care you need is never held up by budget delays.

I've also directed Secretary Shinseki to focus on a top priority, reducing homelessness among veterans. After serving their country, no veteran should be sleeping on the streets—no veteran. We should have zero tolerance for that.

And we're keeping our promise to fulfill another top priority at the VA, cutting the redtape and inefficiencies that cause backlogs and delays in the claims process. This spring, I directed the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to create one unified lifetime electronic health record for the members of the Armed Forces, a single electronic record, with privacy guaranteed, that will stay with them forever. Because after fighting for America, you should not have to fight over paperwork to receive the benefits that you've earned.

Today I can announce that we're taking another step. I've directed my Chief Performance Officer, my Chief Technology Officer, and my Chief Information Officer to join with Secretary Shinseki in a new reform effort. We're launching a new competition to capture the very best ideas of our VA employees who work with you every day.

We're going to challenge each of our 57 regional VA offices to come up with the best ways of doing business, of harnessing the best information technologies, of cutting redtape and breaking through the bureaucracy. And then we're going to fund the best ideas and put them into action, all with a simple mission: cut those backlogs, slash those wait times, deliver your benefits sooner. I know you've heard this for years, but the leadership and resources we're providing this time means that we're going to be able to do it. That is our mission, and we are going to make it happen.

Now, taken together, these investments represent a historic increase in our commitment to America's veterans, a 15-percent increase over last year's funding levels and the largest increase in the VA budget in more than 30 years. And over the next 5 years, we'll invest another $25 billion to make sure that our veterans are getting what they need.

These are major investments, and these are difficult times. Fiscal discipline demands that we make hard decisions, sacrificing certain things we can't afford. But let me be clear: America's commitment to its veterans are not just lines on a budget, they are bonds that are sacred, a sacred trust we're honor bound to uphold. These are commitments that we make to the patriots who serve, from the day they enlist to the day that they are laid to rest. Patriots like you. Patriots like a man named Jim Norene.

His story is his own, but in it we see the larger story of all who serve. He's a child of the Depression who grew up to join that greatest generation, a paratrooper in the 502d Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne, jumping in a daring daylight raid into Holland to liberate captive people, rushing to Bastogne at the Battle of the Bulge, where his commanding general—surrounded by the Germans and asked to surrender—declared, famously, "Nuts."

For his bravery, Jim was awarded the Bronze Star. But like so many others, he rarely spoke of what he did or what he saw, reminding us that true love of country is not boisterous or loud, but rather, the "tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime."

Jim returned home and built a life. He went to school on the GI bill. He got married. He raised a family in his small Oregon farming town. And every Veterans Day, year after year, he visited schoolchildren to speak about the meaning of service. And he did it all as a proud member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Then, this spring, Jim made a decision. He would return to Europe once more. Eighty-five years old, frail and gravely ill, he knew he might not make it back home. But like the paratrooper he always was, he was determined.

So near Bastogne, he returned to the places he knew so well. At a Dutch town liberated by our GIs, schoolchildren lined the sidewalks and sang "The Star-Spangled Banner." And in the quiet clearing of an American cemetery, he walked among those perfect lines of white crosses of fellow soldiers who had fallen long ago, their names forever etched in stone. And then, back where he had served 65 years before,

Jim Norene passed away, at night, in his sleep, quietly, peacefully—the "tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime."

The next day, I was privileged to join the commemoration at Normandy to mark the day when the beaches were stormed and a continent was freed. There were Presidents and Prime Ministers and veterans from the far corners of the Earth, but long after the bands stopped playing and the crowds stopped cheering, it was the story of a departed VFW member that echoed in our hearts.

Veterans of Foreign Wars, you have done your duty to your fallen comrades, to your communities, to your country. You have always fulfilled your responsibilities to America, and so long as I am President of the United States, America will always fulfill its responsibilities to you.

God bless you. God bless all our veterans, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. in the Phoenix Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Glen Gardner, outgoing commander-in-chief, and his wife Jean, Robert E. Wallace, executive director, and Thomas Tradewell, incoming commander-in-chief, and his wife Sharon, Veterans of Foreign Wars; Dixie Hild, national president, and Jan Tittle, senior vice president, Veterans of Foreign Wars Ladies Auxiliary; Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki; White House Chief Performance Officer Jeffrey D. Zients; White House Chief Technology Officer Aneesh Chopra; and White House Chief Information Officer Vivek Kundra. He also referred to his great uncle Charles Payne.

Statement on the Terrorist Attack in Nazran, Ingushetia, Russia
August 17, 2009

I am deeply troubled about reports of a suicide bombing today in Nazran, Ingushetia, that has resulted in the tragic loss of at least 20 lives and 138 injured. There can be no justification for such an act of terrorism. This latest attack highlights the concerning increase in violence in the region affecting officials and civilians alike. Our condolences go out to the Government of Russia and the families of victims.

Remarks During a Meeting With President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and an Exchange With Reporters
August 18, 2009

President Obama. Well, let me, on behalf of the American people and my administration, welcome President Mubarak for his first visit since I've taken office. I want to publicly thank him for the extraordinary hospitality that he showed us when I traveled to Egypt and delivered my speech at Cairo University. It was an extraordinary visit, not only because of the great welcome that I received from the President and the college students who were in attendance, but also, having an opportunity to visit the pyramids was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for me.

The United States and Egypt have worked together closely for many years, and for many of those years, President Mubarak has been a leader and a counselor and a friend to the United States. We obviously have a lot of great challenges that have to be dealt with, and we are continuing to work together to find those areas where we can find common ground and to work in concert to bring peace and security to the region.

The Arab-Israeli situation is something that has been of ongoing interest, and we had an extensive conversation about how we could help to jump-start an effective process on all sides to move away from a status quo that is not working for the Israeli people, the

Palestinian people, or, I think, the region as a whole.

We discussed our common concerns about the potential proliferation of nuclear weapons in the region, including the development of nuclear weapons by Iran, and how we could work together on those fronts. We discussed Iraq, and I want to thank the Government of Egypt for being an Arab country that has moved forward to try to strengthen Iraq as it emerges from a wartime footing and a transition to a more stable democracy.

And we continued to talk about how we can work together on economic development issues, education issues, health issues that can promote the interests of both the American people as well as the Egyptian people. Just to take one example, we've agreed to work together with the Organization of Islamic States to eradicate polio, something that we've been able to successfully deal with here in the United States but still has an impact on populations throughout the Muslim communities around the world.

And so these are the kinds of partnerships that we want to continue to build. There are some areas where we still have disagreements, and where we do have disagreements, we have a frank and honest exchange.

And so I just want to say once again that I am grateful to President Mubarak for his visit, for his willingness to work with us on these critical issues, and to help advance the interest of peace and prosperity around the world.

Thank you very much. Welcome.

President Mubarak. Thank you. I'm going to speak in Arabic—[*inaudible*].

President Obama. Yes, please.

[*At this point, President Mubarak spoke in Arabic.*]

President Obama. Here, we'll have her translate. That way the——

[*The interpreter translated President Mubarak's remarks as follows.*]

President Mubarak. First of all, this is the third time that I meet with President Obama. The first time was in Cairo, when he came to give his address. It was a very strong address, and it removed all doubts about the United States and the Muslim world. The importance of the Cairo visit was very appreciated by the Muslim and Islamic world because the Islamic world had thoughts that the U.S. was against Islam, but his great, fantastic address there has removed all those doubts. That was the first time.

Now, the second time where we met was in Italy during the G–15 summit. We didn't have much time to go in depth into discussions, but we did have some quick discussion.

The third time I meet with President Obama is here today at the White House. We have discussed an array of issues, from our bilateral relations to the issues of the Middle East, the region, to the Palestinian issue, to the issue of Iran, Somalia, and the Africa Horn. Also, several other issues—even we discussed the issue of reform inside Egypt. And I told to President Obama very frankly and very friendly that I have entered into the elections based on a platform that included reforms, and therefore, we have started to implement some of it, and we still have 2 more years to implement it.

Our relations between us and the United States are very good relations and strategic relations. And despite some of the hoops that we had with previous administrations, this did not change of the nature of our bilateral relations.

We have perhaps focused greatly on the Palestinian issue because it's the pivotal issue, as the Palestinian issue has impact on the world, on the region, for—whether for the West or also for the United States.

We have also discussed the issue of Iran and the issue of nuclear Iran, and we talked about these issues very frankly.

And in conclusion of my remarks, I would like to thank President Obama for his welcome to me here at the White House, and I also salute him—this is since 5 years—I also salute President Obama for all his efforts with regard to the Palestinian issue. Since his first day at the White House, he started working on it. And I assured him that we will cooperate with him, and we will be very strong in these efforts, whether with regard to the Palestinian issue or the other regional issues.

And I thank him again.

President Obama. Okay, we got one question each.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Both Presidents, if I may. Reports from Jerusalem today that the Israeli Government has not given permission for any new settlements to be built, although ones that were in process are still in process, and I'm wondering if you have talked about that issue and if that's the sort of thing——

President Mubarak. In Jerusalem?

Q. ——that goes at least part way to meeting what you're asking the Israelis to do.

President Mubarak. Concerning Jerusalem, you mean?

Q. And all settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem.

President Obama. There has been movement in the right direction, and I came in from the start saying that all parties concerned had to take some concrete steps to restart serious negotiations to resolve what has been a longstanding conflict that is not good for the Israeli people and is not good for its neighbors. And I think that the Israeli Government has taken discussions with us very seriously. George Mitchell has been back and forth repeatedly; he will be heading back out there next week. And my hope is that we are going to see not just movement from the Israelis, but also from the Palestinians around issues of incitement and security, from Arab States that show their willingness to engage Israel.

If all sides are willing to move off of the rut that we're in currently, then I think there is a extraordinary opportunity to make real progress. But we're not there yet. I'm encouraged by some of the things that I'm seeing on the ground. We've been seeing reports in the West Bank in particular that checkpoints have been removed in some situations. The security forces of the Palestinian Authority have greatly improved and have been able to deal with the security situation on the West Bank in a way that has inspired not just confidence among the Israeli people, but also among the Palestinian people.

There's been some increased economic activity on the West Bank. All of this is creating a climate in which it's possible for us to see some positive steps and hopefully negotiate towards a final resolution of these longstanding issues. But everybody is going to have to take steps; everybody is going to have to take some risks. It's going to require a lot of hard work, and the United States is committed to being a partner in this process.

And Egypt will be as important as any other party in helping to move the process forward because Egypt is uniquely positioned in some ways, having very strong relationships with Israel, with the Palestinians, and with other Arab States, and President Mubarak has as much experience in the region as anybody.

President Mubarak. I would like to add on what President Obama has just said, and I say that we are trying and working on this goal to bring the two parties to sit together and to get something from the Israeli party and to get something from the Palestinian party. If we perhaps can get them to sit together, we will help.

And also, I have contacts with the Israeli party. I have received calls and contacts with the Prime Minister of Israel, with the head of the state, and also with the Minister of Defense. We are speaking in a good manner, and we are moving into the right direction. But the two parties need to sit together, and this then will give hope that that is a possibility of finding a solution to the Palestinian issue, because it has been ongoing since 60 years. And with this issue ongoing, we lose a lot, and also, this will increase violence. So we support the efforts of the United States to move towards finding a solution.

If this is the issue of Jerusalem that you are asking about, I tell you this is a complicated issue. Then—back then, a time ago, when we—during former President Clinton's era, we almost neared finding an equation, to find a solution for this issue. But afterwards, 8 years afterwards, there was nothing, and this issue moved very slowly. However, if we can find some solution to this, this would be helpful.

President Obama. Okay.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. President Mubarak, you just mentioned about the 60 years conflict. You have been in that conflict as a warrior and as a peacemaker together for a long time. What's different this time? It has been ups and downs, disappointments and achievements. What's different this time? And are we going into another peace process, or are we going again heading for a final status kind of negotiations that finish that business?

And for President Obama, if you care to comment, as President Mubarak said, we cannot afford failure this time. What stand between us now and success?

President Obama. Okay.

President Mubarak. As I said before, this is a complicated issue. I have worked a long time ago when I was in the army, and afterwards during my access of Presidency. This issue has been ongoing 60 years. And we cannot afford wasting more time, because violence will increase, and violence has increased. The level of violence is now much more than it was 10 years ago. Therefore, we need to find the—to move to the final status solution and level.

And I have contacted the Israelis, and they said, perhaps you can talk about the temporary solution or perhaps the final status. But I told them, no, forget about the temporary solution, and forget about temporary borders. That's why I came today to talk to President Obama and to see that if we move forward on this issue, it will give more hope and more confidence to the people about this issue.

The negotiations of the final status will not be easy, and it will be fraught of complications. This issue contains the issue of Jerusalem, the issue of the refugees, the issue of the borders. But I believe that, in cooperation with the United States and through our relations with Israel, I believe that we can reach a solution, because the Arab people wants peace and want a better life, and the Israeli people also want peace and stability in their lives.

President Obama. Well, I think President Mubarak said it well: It's going to be difficult. I do believe that what may have changed—and this is what we have to test—is a growing realization on the part of the Palestinians that Israel is not going anywhere and is a fact, a reality that has to be dealt with, and a recognition on the part of the Israelis that their long-term security interests require finding an accommodation with the Palestinians and ultimately with their Arab neighbors. So the interests on both sides are towards peace.

Now, one of the things that you discover in studying history and being a part of politics is just because something makes sense doesn't mean it happens. And we are going to have to work very hard. And ultimately, there's going to have to be some courageous leadership not only from the Palestinians and the Israelis, but also from the other Arab States to support this effort. And the United States is going to devote time and energy and resources to try to make this happen.

And what I can say is different, from the United States perspective, is that even in the midst of the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, we started dealing with this issue on day one. We didn't wait until year 6 or year 7, after I had been reelected, before we started taking this on. We started dealing with this issue immediately, precisely because it's a difficult issue that requires a lot of groundwork to be laid and sometimes proceeds in fits and starts. But with the partnership of countries like Egypt, we think we can make progress.

Okay, thank you, everybody.

Oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead, please.

President Mubarak. I believe that President Obama is talking about support from the Arab States to this issue. I would say here that if negotiations start, this will lead to the Arab State to support the peace process and to move it forward, because I can tell you that the Arab people are fed up with the lengths that this issue has taken and the issue of the displaced people. So I believe if the two parties sit down, this will lead to have Arab State support moving the peace process forward.

President Obama. Good. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:28 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to George J. Mitchell, U.S. Special

Envoy for Middle East Peace. President Mubarak referred to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Shimon Peres, and Minister of Defense Ehud Barak of Israel. President Mubarak spoke partly in Arabic, and those portions of his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on the Death of Former President Kim Dae-jung of South Korea
August 18, 2009

I was saddened at the passing of former President Kim Dae-jung of the Republic of Korea, a courageous champion of democracy and human rights. President Kim risked his life to build and lead a political movement that played a crucial role in establishing a dynamic democratic system in the Republic of Korea. His service to his country, his tireless efforts to promote peace on the Korean Peninsula, and his personal sacrifices on behalf of freedom are inspirational and should never be forgotten. On behalf of the American people, I extend my condolences to his family and to the Korean people.

Remarks Honoring the 2008 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series Champion
August 19, 2009

Good afternoon, everyone. Please have a seat. Welcome to the White House. Just before I begin, there are a couple of acknowledgements I want to make. First of all, we've got some wounded warriors from Walter Reed and the National Naval Medical Center, and I want everybody to give them a big round of applause. We are grateful to them. They're some big NASCAR fans. I also want to thank a good friend and a terrific Governor, Brad Henry from Oklahoma is here. Stand up, Brad.

You know, it is not every day that we have a championship stock car parked out on the South Lawn. Fortunately, we got Jimmie to agree not to do any burnouts or tear up my backyard. I also suggested to Jimmie that, in exchange for free parking, he should let me take the 48 out for a few laps. He said that was fine, but Secret Service didn't think it was fine. [*Laughter*]

But that's okay, because I'm just glad Jimmie could be here so we can honor him for winning his third consecutive Sprint Cup Championship. Give him a big round of applause. Jimmie got his start racing in motor cross events at the age of 5 and has been racking up trophies and titles for nearly three decades now. But like me, I think his greatest achievement is probably just how far he married up. I had a chance to meet his wife Chandra, and I'm so glad that she could be here today as well. And congratulations for your family's success.

We want to keep—everyone who keeps the 48 upfront—we want to congratulate all of them: owner Rick Hendrick, the crew chief—go ahead—[*applause*]—Rick deserves a round of applause; crew chief Chad Knaus—did I say that right?—and all the folks at Hendrick Motorsports. Because we all know that NASCAR, winning isn't just about who's behind the wheel during the race; it's also about who's got your back in the pit and everyone back at the shop who preps these cars week after week.

With these folks at his side, Jimmie's hoping for a fourth series championship in a row this year. But I think there's another group of guys back here who may have something to say about that. Jeff, good luck in your "drive for five." And good luck to all the other chase drivers joining us today. I'm extraordinarily grateful to them.

We're also joined today by one of NASCAR's alltime greats, "The King," Richard Petty, sitting right in the front row where he belongs. With a family tradition that's generations strong, the Pettys are about as close as you can get to a NASCAR dynasty.

And finally, I want to recognize Mike Helton, NASCAR's president, for his dedicated leadership, and of course, Brian France, NASCAR's chairman, and his wonderful wife Amy, who've done so much for the sport. Please give them a big round of applause. Let me also take an opportunity to say that our thoughts are with the NASCAR community at the recent passing of Tom Murphy, a man who put his heart and soul into NASCAR over the years.

You know, it's fitting that you've all come here to the White House, the American people's house, because NASCAR is a uniquely American sport. Since its humble beginnings, when moonshiners raced on the sands of Daytona Beach during Prohibition, it's grown into a sport with tens of millions of fans here in America and around the world.

But NASCAR's about a lot more than just racing cars. It's as much about what you give back off the track as you give on the track. It's about what you're doing to protect our environment and help America become energy independent: using solar energy and working to offset carbon emissions and even hiring a director of green innovation to take your commitment to the next level.

It's about supporting our troops and our veterans, from flyovers and red, white, and blue paint jobs on Memorial Day to your visits to Walter Reed and Iraq and Afghanistan that show our appreciation for the brave men and women who are serving our country.

And it's about all the foundations NASCAR has started to support schools and hospitals, combat hunger and homelessness, and work to help folks in our communities, like the campers here from Victory Junction, kids who can teach all of us a thing or two about courage and hope and I hope had the time of their lives at summer camp.

After all, one of the core values of the NASCAR community is the belief that service isn't just something you do once in a while when it's convenient; it's a way of life. I think Jeff Gordon put it best when he said, simply, "Any person out there should do something some way to give back to their community."

And that's what folks from more than 150 countries see around the world when they tune in to your races: not just your speed and your skill, but also your compassion, your dedication to your families and your communities, how much you love this country, and how strongly you support the heroes who serve it. And that's the face of America that you show to the world.

So today I want to thank all of you for that and for everything you do to make this country a better country. And I wish you all the best of luck in this year's chase. God bless all of you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much, everybody.

I think I've got to take a shot next to the cup here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:16 p.m. on the South Portico at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to NASCAR driver Jimmie Johnson and his wife Chandra; and NASCAR driver Jeff Gordon.

Interview With Michael A. Smerconish of the "Michael Smerconish Morning Show"

August 20, 2009

Mr. Smerconish. Hi, everybody. Welcome back to the program. I'm Michael Smerconish. What an honor for me to say I'm live at the White House, and I'm joined by the President of the United States. Mr. President, what an honor for me, and thank you, sir, for this privilege, and thank you for coming back to my radio program.

The President. Michael, it's great to be on the show again. Every time we've been on, it's been a great time, so I appreciate the opportunity.

Health Care Reform

Mr. Smerconish. Folks are stacked up, as you might imagine. They're anxious to pose some questions about health care to the President of the United States. More than 5,000 e-mail suggestions have flowed through my web site in just the last 24 hours alone. If it's all right, I'll start by posing a couple of questions and some of the things that I continue to hear from folks, and we'll welcome phone callers as well.

Allow me, sir, to begin with this. Did Secretary Sebelius misspeak last weekend? You know, a great deal has been made as to what she said pertaining to the so-called public option.

The President. Yes. She really didn't misspeak. The surprising thing is, she'd been saying this all along. She said the same thing a month ago. And let me just describe what the issue is here. We have consistently talked about the need for health care reform because family premiums are going up three times faster than inflation and wages. The costs of Medicare and Medicaid will bankrupt this country if we don't reduce the cost inflation of health care. You've got families who can't get health care because of preexisting conditions, or they bump up against some lifetime cap if a family member gets really ill.

So what we've said is, there are a number of components of health care. One is that for people who already have health insurance, they can keep their health insurance, but we're going to have some consumer protections to regulate how insurers operate. For example, they can't prohibit people from getting it—health insurance—because of a preexisting condition. They can't have lifetime caps or yearly caps that prevent people from getting the care that they need.

We're also going—for people who don't have health insurance—to set up a system similar to what Congress has, where you can buy into a bigger pool, get better rates, have better protections around you. You would be buying that insurance from private insurers. But one of the options we talked about was a public option, where there wouldn't be a profit motive involved; it would be non-for-profit. And that public option would give you affordable health insurance.

Now, what we've said is, we think that's a good idea. But we haven't said that that's the only aspect of health insurance. And what she essentially said was, is that all these other insurance reforms are just as important as the public option. The press got a little excited, and some folks on the left got a little excited about this. Our position hasn't changed. We think that the key is cost control, competition, making sure that people have good, quality options. If we're able to achieve that, that's the end that we're seeking. And the means—you know, we can have some good arguments about what the best way to achieve it is, but we've got to change, because the status quo is unsustainable.

Economic Stabilization and Health Care

Mr. Smerconish. Mr. President, there's a mindset among many folks in my audience who say that the endgame, it's all about single-payer, that it's a public option or it's a cooperative. And, sir, you know that there's a perception out there that you want it all. You know, you want to be in the banks, you want to be in the automotive industry, and now you want to be in health care. Can you address that mindset?

The President. I absolutely can. First of all, look, the intervention in the banks wasn't started by me; it was started by a conservative Republican administration. And rightly so, because our banks were on the verge of meltdown. The only thing that we've done is said let's put in place some financial regulations to make sure that this doesn't happen again.

The auto interventions weren't started by me; they were started by a conservative Republican administration. The only thing that we did was rather than just write GM and Chrysler a blank check, we said, you know what, if you're going to get any more taxpayer money, you've got to be accountable. They

went through a record bankruptcy, and now GM for the first time is actually hiring folks back.

So I know that there's this perception that somehow we have engaged in these extraordinary interventions. Part of it had to do with the worst financial crisis in history. And the fact that both the auto bailout and the bank bailout were started under a previous, conservative Republican administration indicates the fact that this wasn't ideological; this was a matter of necessity.

Now, as far as health care goes, I've consistently said I would love the private marketplace to be handling this without any Government intervention. The problem is, it's not working. What we're seeing is about 14,000 folks lose their health insurance every single day. We are seeing health care inflation go up about twice as fast as regular inflation. Businesses are being crippled by it. Small businesses especially have almost no access to the marketplace because they've got no leverage with insurance companies.

So all we've said is, let's keep the private system intact, but let's make sure that people who right now can't get health insurance—about 46 million—that they're able to buy into the market. And number two, let's have some consumer protections to make sure that those of us who have health insurance don't end up getting a bad deal because we didn't read the fine print and we think that we have coverage; when we finally get sick and we need it, it turns out that we're vulnerable because insurance companies aren't operating in the interests of their customers.

CAR Allowance Rebate System

Mr. Smerconish. I like to drive an MDX and an F–150, and I've communicated by e-mail in the last 24 hours with the woman who sold me the MDX and the guy who sold me the F–150, and each of them, Mr. President, are saying that Cash for Clunkers has been a great idea and a wonderful initiative, and they've closed a lot of deals, but the payments are late. And I'm hearing from a number of folks who say, "Come on, if the Federal Government can't get it together relative to Cash for Clunkers, I don't want to entrust my health care to the Federal Government."

The President. Well, let me first address Cash for Clunkers. It has been successful beyond anybody's imagination. And we're now slightly victims of success, because the thing happened so quick, there was so much more demand than anybody expected that dealers were overwhelmed with applications.

Now, this program has only been going on for a few weeks, and we have hired three times as many people to process this stuff as we originally had. There has not been extraordinary delays on the U.S. Government's part. I understand dealers want to get their money back as soon as possible, but the fact of the matter is, this is a good-news story; they are seeing sales that they have not seen in years.

And they will get their money, but we've got to process it properly, because if we were careless about it, if we were just sending out checks where applications were incomplete and so on, first of all, we'd be breaking the law because there are statutes set up in terms of how this is supposed to go. And secondly, there'd probably be some story—you'd be asking me about scandals, where there were a whole bunch of checks of taxpayer money being wasted, going out to people who hadn't actually bought cars.

So I think this is actually a high-class problem to have, that we're selling too many cars too quickly and there's some backlog in the application process. It is getting fixed.

Mr. Smerconish. Mr. President, Ernie is a listener of mine on WTKK in Boston and wishes to pose the following question. Ernie, go ahead for the President of the United States.

Health Insurance Exchange/Public Health Insurance Option

Q. Thank you, Michael. Mr. President——

The President. How are you, Ernie?

Q. I'm good. Thank you for taking this call.

The President. Great to talk to you.

Q. I understand you've said that the Federal health care plan for Government employees is a pretty good plan.

The President. It is.

Q. And Congress has voted, to my understanding, not to join the public plan once it

passes because they want to keep their good Federal plan. Would you be willing to either urge Congress to have the Federal employees join the public plan, or would you be willing to urge Congress to somehow open up the Federal health plan to all Americans?

Mr. Smerconish. Thank you, Ernie. I hear this all the time, Mr. President.

The President. Well, it's a great question, Ernie. First of all, understand that currently, Federal employees have a very good health care plan because they're able to leverage the insurance companies. There are so many members of their—of the Federal workforce that they can get the best rates possible, for every insurance company wants to do business with the Federal Government. So premiums are lower, and it's a better deal overall.

The same concept is what we're trying to do in setting up what's called a health insurance exchange. Essentially, it'd be a marketplace where people who currently don't have health insurance or small businesses could pool their numbers so they have leverage over the insurance companies. And they could go on a web site and look at the various options, the types of various private health insurance plans that are being offered, and choose the one that's best for their families. So we're actually trying to duplicate what exists for Federal employees. We want to make that available to everybody else.

Now, what we have said is, let's make a public option one choice of many choices that are available to people who are joining the exchange. And I see nothing wrong with potentially having that public option as one option for Federal employees as well.

But the important thing that I think I have to make absolutely clear: Nobody would be obligated to choose the public option. If you went on that web site and you said, you know what, Aetna or Blue Cross Blue Shield are offering a good deal, and I would rather choose that plan than the public plan, you'd be perfectly free to do so. Nobody would be saying, you are obligated to go into a public plan.

Mr. Smerconish. I think what folks are saying is that they'd love it if you'd stand up and say, whatever it is that we're creating, be it a co-op, be it a public option, whatever name ultimately might be ascribed to it, we in the executive branch, we in the Congress, we will live with exactly these parameters.

The President. I think there would be—I think it would make perfect sense for us to make the public option available to Federal employees as well. But keep in mind, it would just be a choice.

Mr. Smerconish. Understood. Let me keep moving, if I may. Tracy listens on WXNT News Talk 1430 in Indianapolis. Tracy, your question for the President.

Health Care for Illegal Immigrants/The President's Health Care Reform Priorities

Q. Mr. President, thanks for taking my call.

The President. Hi, Tracy.

Q. Hi. Until I heard you say that a private option is just a sliver of your health care proposal recently, I think myself and many Americans thought that pretty much was your proposal.

The President. I know.

Q. So my question is, could you please quickly list five or six bullet points of what legislation must include for you to be willing to sign it? For instance, employer mandates, tort reform, illegal immigrants, what about them? Must it include a public option?

The President. I'd be happy to. First of all, you mentioned illegal immigrants. This has been an example of just pure misinformation out there. None of the bills that have been voted on in Congress and none of the proposals coming out of the White House propose giving coverage to illegal immigrants—none of them. That has never been on the table; nobody has discussed it. So everybody who is listening out there, when you start hearing that somehow this is all designed to provide health insurance to illegal immigrants, that is simply not true and has never been the case.

Mr. Smerconish. What is their fate, if I might ask? Because there's a 1986 law on the book that says if you show up at an ER, you've got to be treated.

The President. Well, that will continue, because we don't want a situation in which some child, even if they're an illegal immigrant,

shows up in an emergency room with tuberculosis and nobody is giving them treatment, and then they're going back to the playground and playing next to our kids.

So there—I think there is a basic standard of decency where if somebody is in a death situation or a severe illness, that we're going to provide them emergency care. But nobody has talked about providing health insurance to illegal immigrants. I want to make that absolutely clear.

Now, Tracy, you had a good point about what are the bullet points that I want. Number one, it's got to be deficit neutral. This has to be paid for, because in the past, some of the health care plans that we've put forward have not been paid for. A good example of this was the prescription drug benefit for seniors. That was a important thing to do, but we never actually figured out how to pay for it. That just went directly into the deficit and the national debt. We can't afford to do that. So that would be point number one.

Point number two, it has to bend the cost curve. What that means is that we've got to create a plan that experts credibly say will reduce health care inflation, because if all we're doing is adding more people, but we're not controlling costs, that will blow up the deficit over the long term, and it will blow up the burdens on individual families and businesses. We've got to get control of our costs. We spend $6,000 more than any other advanced country per person on health care. That's number two.

Number three, we've got to have the insurance reforms I talked about for people who already have health insurance. And that means making sure you can get health insurance even if you've got a preexisting condition, making sure that you're not burdened by lifetime caps, making sure that insurance companies can't drop you just because you get sick or because you're older or because you're not as healthy; so making sure that there are basic insurance protections, that's very important.

Number four is I want to make sure that we have a health exchange, as I just described, that is similar to what Members of Congress have, where you will have a set of options. If you're a small business, if you're an individual, self-employed, you have trouble getting health insurance right now, you can go and look at a bunch of options. And we've got to make it affordable for middle class families, so part of the plan has to be that if you can't afford a market-based premium, that we're giving you a little bit of help and you're able to get health insurance.

Choice, competition, reducing costs—those are the things that I want to see accomplished in this health reform bill.

Personal Responsibility for Health

Mr. Smerconish. Where, Mr. President, does personal responsibility factor into all this? There was a front-page story in USA Today recently that talked about obesity being the single most significant factor. I mean, you're a fit guy. How about rewarding those who get on a StairMaster every day?

The President. Well, the interesting thing is, you're already starting to see this happen among a lot of private companies. Safeway, for example, is a company that has done a great job in helping encourage its employees to get fit, and they actually give them an incentive. They say, "Look, we're—you're going to save X amount on your insurance premiums; you'll see that in your paycheck if you are taking steps to take care of yourself." And I think that creating incentives like that for prevention, for wellness, creating cash incentives for people who—where it shows up they're saving money on their health insurance because of it, I think that's something that should be part of this.

Mr. Smerconish. Mr. President, Joe listens to me at Home Base, which is the Big Talker 1210 in Philadelphia. Joseph, go ahead for the President of the United States.

Bipartisan Cooperation on Health Care Reform

Q. Thank you for taking my call, Mr. President.

The President. Hey, Joe, how are you?

Q. Oh, I'm scared out of my mind talking to you here. [*Laughter*] I'm a supporter, worked hard for you last year.

The President. I appreciate you.

Q. And I'm getting a little ticked off that it feels like the knees are buckling a little bit. You

have an overwhelming majority in both the House and the Senate, and you own the whole shooting match. And I'm just not getting—it's very frustrating to watch you try and compromise with a lot of these people who aren't willing to compromise with you.

Mr. Smerconish. Are your knees buckling? That's his question.

The President. Well, look, I guarantee you, Joe, we are going to get health care reform done. And I know that there are a lot of people out there who have been hand-wringing, and folks in the press are following every little twist and turn of the legislative process. You know, passing a big bill like this is always messy. It's—FDR was called a socialist when he passed Social Security. JFK and Lyndon Johnson, they were both accused of a Government takeover of health care when they passed Medicare. This is the process that we go through, because, understandably, the American people have a long tradition of being suspicious of government until the government actually does something that helps them, and then they don't want anybody messing with whatever gets set up.

And I'm confident we're going to get it done, and as far as negotiations with Republicans, my attitude has always been, let's see if we can get this done with some consensus. I would love to have more Republicans engaged and involved in this process. I think early on a decision was made by the Republican leadership that said, "Look, let's not give them a victory, and maybe we can have a replay of 1993, '94 when Clinton came in. He failed on health care, and then we won in the midterm elections, and we got the majority." And I think there's some folks who are taking a page out of that playbook.

But this is—shouldn't be a political issue. This is a issue for the American people. There are a bunch of Republicans out there who have been working very constructively. One of them, Olympia Snowe in Maine, she's been dedicated on this. Chuck Grassley, Mike Enzi, others—they've been meeting in the Senate Finance Committee. I want to give them a chance to work through these processes.

And we're happy to make sensible compromises. What we're not willing to do is give up on the core principle that Americans who don't have health insurance should get it, that Americans who do have health insurance should get a better deal from insurance companies and have consumer protections. We've got to reduce health care inflation so that everybody can keep the health care that they have. That's going to be my priorities, and I think we can get it done.

Release of Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed Al-Megrahi

Mr. Smerconish. A bit off message, today the Scots released the Lockerbie bomber due to—actually, maybe it is health care-related. He's got terminal cancer. Your take on this—a lot of folks very offended over a perceived lack of justice.

The President. We have been in contact with the Scottish Government indicating that we objected to this, and we thought it was a mistake. We're now in contact with the Libyan Government, and want to make sure that if in fact this transfer has taken place, that he's not welcomed back in some way, but instead should be under house arrest. We've also, obviously, been in contact with the families of the Pan Am victims and indicated to them that we don't think this was appropriate.

Afghanistan/Pakistan

Mr. Smerconish. Mr. President, in each of our prior three conversations, I spoke with you extensively about the need for closure, and we agreed relative to bin Laden and Ayman Al-Zawahiri. And as a matter of fact—and this is well documented; I've written and spoken about it extensively—things that you said during the course of the campaign played a critical role in my personal decisionmaking pertaining to the 2008 election. So I feel I'd be derelict in my duty if I didn't come here today and say, where are we? I know we had a major victory recently with the number-one individual for the Taliban in those tribal regions. But pertaining to bin Laden and Ayman Al-Zawahiri, where is it?

The President. Well, here's where we're at. We are continuing to ramp up the pressure in Afghanistan. And we had a—what appears to be a successful election in Afghanistan despite the Taliban's effort to disrupt it. You've got General McChrystal now over there and more troops who are putting pressure on the eastern and southern portions of Afghanistan.

On the other hand, you've got the Pakistani Army for the first time actually fighting in a very aggressive way, and that's how we took out Baitullah Mehsud——

Mr. Smerconish. Right.

The President. ——the top Taliban leader in Pakistan, who was also one of bin Laden's key allies. So the goal here is essentially to have a pincer, where we are squeezing them on both sides. We're eliminating their allies. It's making it more difficult for them to communicate, making it more difficult for them to operate safe havens, and over time, what we hope to do is to flush them out. We are going to keep on putting pressure on them, and I know that it's at great cost. I mean, I have to sign letters to family members who have fallen, and a lot more are falling in Afghanistan than in Iraq. And as a consequence, we've got to make sure that we are really focused on finishing the job in Afghanistan, but it's going to take some time.

Mr. Smerconish. Mr. President, Susan listens to WOR News Radio 710 in New York City. Susan, go ahead for the President of the United States.

Q. Yes, thank you very much, Mr. President, for talking to us directly about this important issue.

Health Care Reform at the State Level

The President. Thank you, Susan.

Q. We all want reform. I guess it's really a matter of what the best solution is. And a lot of us feel that the Federal Government is just not equipped or it's their role to be getting involved in delivering health care services. And we're very concerned that most of the money will actually go—instead of taking care of people, it will go to, you know, the cost of administering a huge Government bureaucracy. Why not do something more like giving incentives to the States? Like here in New York, we already have free health care for people who can't afford it. And you know, it should only be for people who can't afford it, not for the 20- and 30-somethings that choose to spend their money on SUVs and the latest electronic gadgets. And it's not free, because we all know that we're going to be paying for it, and it should be only for the people who can't really afford it. And we want to have our own health care decisions locally, and we don't want the Federal Government making those decisions for us.

Mr. Smerconish. Is there a State solution here, Mr. President?

The President. Well, look, first of all, Susan, I think that it's important to understand that part of the health reform proposal that we've put forward would involve the States. The States, in some cases, would be empowered to expand Medicaid to cover more people the same way that they've been able to cover more children under the Children's Health Insurance Program. So a sizable portion of the people who are currently uninsured would in fact be getting their insurance through the States. That's how the current Medicaid program is able to allow States to cover more people.

Keep in mind that nobody is talking about the Government administering all of health care. What we're talking about here is a public option that people could sign up for, but in that situation, they'd have to operate like any private insurer. They'd have to be collecting premiums and so forth.

The track record for Government administering health care actually is surprisingly good. Medicare, for example, a Government program, has much lower administrative costs than private insurers do. Now, part of it is, is because they don't have—either somebody is qualified or they're not, and so signing them up is a lot more automatic.

But that points to one of the big problems that we have. In private insurance, huge amounts of insurance companies are spending a lot of money and a lot of effort and a lot of staff just trying to cherry-pick people who are healthy and sign them up and then eliminate people who are sick. And part of what we want to do here is just reform the system so that

insurance companies are operating more fairly to all people.

If you're young, actually, it's easier to get health insurance these days. The really tough population are folks who are from 50 to 64. Maybe they just got laid off. Maybe they're self-employed. They have a whale of a time trying to buy health insurance, and we want to make sure that there is a market for them.

Last point that I would make is that, you mention the fact that a lot of young people opt out. One of the things that we would do under reform is to say, if you want, you can stay on your health insurance—or your parents' health insurance up to the age of 26. That would cover a lot of young people who they—fall in that gap. Their first job doesn't necessarily offer them insurance. It gives them a way of having coverage until they get that job that has a little bit more security.

Mr. Smerconish. You're needed across town. I appreciate very much the privilege of coming to the White House. Mr. President, thank you so much for being on the Michael Smerconish program.

The President. Mike, it's always a pleasure. And I want to thank all your listeners, terrific questions. There's a great dialogue that takes place on this show, and I just hope that we can continue that dialogue in the same spirit to solve some of America's big problems.

Mr. Smerconish. Thank you, sir. I'll be back in just a moment from the White House.

NOTE: The interview began at 1:05 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius; Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan; and Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization. Mr. Smerconish referred to Ayman Al-Zawahiri, founder of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and senior Al Qaida associate.

Remarks at the Organizing for America National Health Care Forum and a Question-and-Answer Session
August 20, 2009

The President. Thank you, everybody. Hey. Thank you.

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. Yes we can. Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. This looks like a casual crowd; I'm going to—[*laughter*]—take off my jacket here. Let me begin by thanking Beth, not just for the great introduction, but for the unbelievable dedication that she showed throughout the campaign, but more importantly, almost, now trying to actually get some things done.

I want to thank Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz. Where'd Debbie go? I hear you were on a scooter. I want to see that at some point. [*Laughter*] That's pretty cool—[*laughter*]—always stylish. [*Laughter*] I want to acknowledge my great friend Tim Kaine, who joined us earlier by phone and is doing just a great job on behalf of not only the people of Virginia, but also on behalf of Democrats all across the country. And to all of my Organizing for America volunteers, thank you so much for your unbelievable dedication. It is good to be here.

It's great to be here with all of you because it reminds me of how we got here in the first place. We're here because you believed that after an era of selfishness and greed, that we could reclaim a sense of responsibility and a sense that we have obligations to each other, not just here in Washington, but all across the country. You believed that instead of growing inequality, we could restore a sense of fairness and balance to our economic life and create lasting growth and prosperity. You believed that at a time of war and turmoil, we could stand strong against our enemies, but also stand firmly for our ideals and reach out to the rest of the world and describe to them what America is about and how we can forge

together a world of common interests and common concerns.

That's the change that you believed in. That's why you worked so hard, knocking on doors and making phone calls and hot sun and—[*laughter*]—cold winds and sometimes having doors slammed in your faces and—[*laughter*]—your family members all saying, "Why are you doing this?" [*Laughter*] "Because this guy has no chance." [*Laughter*] That's something I'll never forget.

But we all know that winning the election was just the beginning. I said this—the—election night, I said it at the Inauguration, and somehow I think maybe some people thought I was just fooling. I was serious. Winning the election was just the start. Victory in an election wasn't the change that we sought; it had to manifest itself in the real day-to-day lives of ordinary Americans all across the country. And I know that folks like Beth and all of you at OFA have been working to make that change, doing the same things you were doing during the campaign, going block by block, neighbor by neighbor, having doors slammed in your faces—[*laughter*]—people telling you, "Why are you doing this?" [*Laughter*] "It doesn't make any chance."

But just so you don't lose heart as we enter into probably our toughest fight, let's just recall what we've already gotten done. Not 1 month into this administration, we responded to the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression by putting in place a sweeping economic recovery program that has already made an enormous difference in people's lives. You've got millions of people who have unemployment insurance and got COBRA so they could keep their health insurance and States who've been able to avoid layoffs of teachers and firefighters; a tax cut for 95 percent of working families, a commitment we made during the campaign that we have already fulfilled; thousands of people being put back to work all across the country rebuilding our roads and our bridges and our hospitals.

As a consequence of everything that we did just in that first month, we've been able to see a stabilization of the financial system where a lot of economists thought that we were going to be dipping into a great depression. Obviously, we're not out of the woods yet, but we've taken steps to address the housing crisis and keep people in their homes. We made some tough choices to keep the financial and the automotive sectors from collapsing, which would have further shocked our economy.

That's on the economic side. In the meantime, we lifted the ban on stem cell research; we expanded health insurance programs to 11 million more children across the country. We passed a national service bill that will give thousands of Americans opportunities to serve.

[*At this point, the President coughed.*]

The President. I get all choked up just talking about it. [*Laughter*]

We passed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act to make sure that women are treated the same way as men. We passed legislation to protect consumers from unfair rate hikes and abusive fees for credit card companies, and some of those rules went into effect today. We passed laws to protect our children from marketing by tobacco manufacturers. We've prohibited torture. We've begun to leave Iraq to its people. We've taken the fight to Al Qaida in Afghanistan and Pakistan. We've rebuilt our military, and we're restoring our alliances and our standing in the world. So not a bad track record, not a bad track record. We should be proud of what we've accomplished. But we're not satisfied. And we should be confident but not complacent. We've got more work to do, and we've got more promises to keep. And one of those promises is to achieve quality, affordable health care for every single American, and that is what we intend to do when Congress gets back into session.

Now, we all know this has been an emotional debate. We've seen tempers flare. Accusations have been hurled. And sometimes it seems like one loud voice can drown out all the civil, sensible voices out there. But remember one thing: Nothing's more powerful than millions of voices calling for change. That's how we won this election. You know this, and that's why since OFA launched its health reform campaign in June, you've hosted 11,000 events in more than 2,500

towns in every single State and every single congressional district, which is remarkable.

And of course, the TV cameras aren't there when you're doing all this. [*Laughter*] And when you notice that nobody is paying attention to what you're doing, just remember, we've been through this before. Some of you were involved when we were in Iowa, 30 points down, and all of Washington said, "Oh, it's over"—hand-wringing and angst and teeth-gnashing. [*Laughter*] And then last year, just about this time, you'll recall that the Republicans had just nominated their Vice Presidential candidate, and everybody was—the media was obsessed with it, and cable was 24 hours a day, and "Obama's lost his mojo," and—[*laughter*]. Do you remember all that? [*Laughter*] There's something about August going into September—[*laughter*]—where everybody in Washington gets all wee-weed up. [*Laughter*] I don't know what it is. [*Laughter*] But that's what happens.

But instead of being preoccupied with the polls and with the pundits and with the cable chatter, what you guys consistently did was you just kept on working steadily, deliberately, sensibly, knocking on doors, talking to people, talking to your coworkers, just giving people the facts, explaining to them a vision of how we're going to move forward. And that's what we're going to have to do today, because we're going to have to cut through a lot of nonsense out there, a lot of absurd claims that have been made about health insurance reform.

There was a poll done—some of you may have seen—Wall Street Journal/NBC poll. It turns out that a huge proportion of the American people are convinced, A, that somehow health reform means illegal immigrants are going to get health care; B, that it's a Government takeover of health care; C, that all the money's going to be funding abortions; D, that—what's the other one?—"death panels," that we're all going to be, you know, pulling the plug on grandma. Now, come on. [*Laughter*]

We can have a real debate because health care is hard, and there are some legitimate issues out there that have to be sorted through and worked on, as Debbie talked about. But what we're going to have to do is to cut through the noise and the misinformation, and the best ambassadors for true information, factual information, is all of you. You have more credibility than anybody on television when it comes to your family members and your friends and your neighbors. And that's why you being involved is so important.

Now, I don't have to explain to you why it's so important to pass health reform for the 46 million people who don't have health insurance. But it's just as important that Americans who do have health insurance, which are the majority of Americans, that they understand what health reform means for them. So let me just make sure I try to give you some bullet points here, because right now the system works very well for the insurance companies, but it doesn't work so well for the American people.

First, no matter what you've heard, if you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor under the reform proposals that we've put forward. If you like your private health insurance plan, you can keep it. If your employer provides you health insurance on the job, nobody is talking about messing with that.

If you don't have health insurance, we do intend to provide you high-quality, affordable options. And that, by the way, is not just poor people who don't have health insurance; in fact, a lot of poor Americans have health insurance under Medicaid. Mostly it's working Americans who don't have health insurance on the job, or it's self-employed Americans, or it's small-business owners or people who work for small businesses who don't have health insurance. And what we want to do is to give them a menu of options that they can choose from and then a little bit of help in terms of making their premiums more affordable.

So that is absolutely critical. Now, one of the options we want to provide them is a public option, and there's been—this has been a confusion around this—[*applause*]—there's been a lot of confusion about this, so let me just clarify. I think a public option is important. And let me explain why.

We're going to have a marketplace where people can select the options that work best

for them, the insurance plan that works best for them. A lot of those choices—the overwhelming majority of those choices will be private insurance options, just like Members of Congress have; they're allowed to choose from various proposals or various plans that are part of the Federal employees' health plan.

But what we do think is, if we have a public option in there, that can help keep insurers honest; it can provide a benchmark for what an affordable basic plan should look like. And so even though we've got a whole bunch of insurance regulations that ensure that any private insurer that's participating in the exchange is giving you a fair deal, this is sort of like the belt-and-suspenders concept: It means that not only do they have to abide by these regulations, but they also have to compete with somebody whose interest is not just profit, but instead is interested in making sure that the American people get decent health care.

Now, having said that, I want everybody to be clear that the public option is just one option. It will be voluntary. Nobody is talking about you having to be in the public option. Only—the only thing that we're talking about is this being available to you as a choice, expanding consumer choice. And we think that's a good idea.

Now, there are a whole bunch of other aspects to health insurance reform, though, that people have to understand. We want to make sure that, for example, insurance companies can't prevent you from getting health insurance because of a preexisting condition. That will be the law whether you're in the health insurance exchange or you're just keeping the insurance that you already have. You should be able to keep it regardless of preexisting condition. You should be able to purchase it. There shouldn't be lifetime caps or yearly caps where you bump up against it and suddenly you've got huge out-of-pocket costs that drive you into bankruptcy. We've got to make sure that there are basic consumer protections on that.

You should be able to keep your health insurance if you get sick or you lose your job or you change jobs. And all too often, what happens is, when you need insurance most, that's when the insurers decide to drop you, and we've got to make sure that that is against the law. And that's part of what health insurance reform is all about.

So it's going to be—bring down skyrocketing costs, it's going to save families money, it's going to save businesses money, and it's going to save Government money. We are going to make Medicare more efficient, guaranteeing today's seniors better benefits than they have right now. We're going to make sure that that doughnut hole in the middle of their prescription drug plan, that that doughnut hole is closed, because we want to make sure that seniors who are already living on fixed incomes during difficult times aren't having to dig even deeper to increase drug company profits.

So I just want everybody to understand that in addition to providing health insurance for people who don't have it, even if you have health insurance, you've got a stake in this debate. Fourteen thousand people are losing their health insurance every single day. Millions of people all across the country are vulnerable to exclusions because of things like preexisting conditions. Millions of Americans have experienced the fact that premiums have gone up three times faster than inflation and faster than incomes.

And if we go at the pace that we're going right now, there are going to be a whole lot of families who make the decision that they can't afford health insurance because the costs are simply unsustainable.

And if you're a deficit hawk, then you should be especially concerned about passing health care reform, because at the pace we're on right now, Medicare is going to run out of money in 8 years. It won't be totally broke, but it will be in the red, because the costs are going up a lot faster than the money that's coming in.

So when you're talking to seniors out there, tell them, number one, nobody is talking about cutting their benefits. Talk to them about the fact that, by the way, Medicare is already a Government program—[*laughter*]—so when people say, "Keep Government out of our health care," make sure they know that Medicare is a Government program. But also explain to them that part of what we want to do is strengthen the program so that it's going to be there over

the long haul. We don't want a situation in which Medicare runs short of money because we did not make the changes that were needed early on.

I am absolutely confident that we can get this done, but I want everybody to remember, this has never been easy, never been easy. When FDR proposed Social Security, all across what was, I guess, the equivalent of today's Internet, right—[*laughter*]—all the newspapers and the radio shows and all that—he was accused of being a socialist. He was going to bring socialism to America. How dare he! When JFK and then Lyndon Johnson proposed Medicare, everybody suggested, this is going to be a Government takeover of health care; it's going to destroy your relationship with your doctor. The same arguments that are being made now have been made every time we've tried to propose a significant change that ultimately made people more secure, improved our health care, improved our quality of life.

So we cannot be intimidated by some of these scare tactics. We have to understand that there a lot of people who are invested in the status quo and make a lot of money out of it. We've got to also understand that people are understandably nervous and worried about any significant changes when it comes to something as important as health care, because it touches on your lives, it's very personal, and so they're more vulnerable to misinformation.

And that's why what all of you do is so important, because people trust you—your neighbors, your friends, fellow community members—they trust you. They know you. And if you are presenting the facts clearly and fairly, I'm absolutely confident that we're going to win this debate. But we're going to have a lot of work to do. I'm grateful that you're willing to do it. Let's go get 'em. [*Applause*] Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. All right. Thank you. All right.

Organizing for America Director Mitch Stewart. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you for taking time out of your very busy schedule to talk to all of us, your supporters, about this critical issue. I would just like to add, for folks who are interested, either watching this at home or at work, you can sign up to participate—[*laughter*]—or host a health care event right now by entering your Zip Code. And for folks who are listening on the phone, please go to BarackObama.com and sign up to participate or host an event near you.

Sir, we've collected thousands of questions from across the country, and we're going to take three—one from e-mail, one from the telephone, and another one from Twitter—and then we're going to open it up to your volunteers here—these are your best volunteers in the area—to have you call on them and ask questions there.

So with the first question, Cindy.

Health Care Reform/Public and Private Health Insurance/Misinformation Concerning Health Care Reform

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. Our first question comes from Julia in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Julia writes: "I am a volunteer community organizer in Colorado. This summer, our volunteers have called 4,800 members of the community and gathered declarations of support from over 2,600 people. The debate is really heating up. What do you think is the most compelling argument we can make for health reform?"

The President. Well, thank you, Cindy, if you're listening. I appreciate the question and the great work that you're doing.

The first thing that you have to explain to folks when we're having a discussion about health care is that the status quo is unsustainable. Or another way of putting it: If you like what you have now, unless we make some changes, you're not going to have exactly what it is that you like.

And the reason is because health care costs are going up so fast—as I said, three times faster than wages, much faster than inflation in every other area of life—that it's going to gobble up a higher and higher percentage of your income in terms of premiums and out-of-pocket costs. More and more employers are going to say, "We just can't afford to provide you health insurance, or if we do, we're going to push more and more costs onto you."

You're going to lose more and more of your paycheck, even if you don't know it. It turns out, in the 1990s, wages and incomes flatlined. And part of the reason was because a lot of the company profits that normally would have gone to salary increases or wage increases ended up being gobbled up by health care.

So if you've got a private plan, you have something to worry about. If you are on a public program like Medicare, you have something to worry about because we're going to be running out of money. And so the status quo is unsustainable. You've got to make sure that you explain that to folks. It's not as if, if we just stand still, everything is going to be okay.

Point number two is that if you don't have health insurance, we're not forcing you to go into a Government plan. We in fact just want to set up a system similar to what Members of Congress enjoy, where you have a menu of private insurance options, and we're just going to give you a little bit of help so that you could afford the premiums. That's all we're talking about.

Now, one of the options will be a public option, because we think that potentially could be a better deal for consumers. But nobody is going to force you into that option. It will, however, help keep the private insurers honest, because if they're charging a lot more—higher profits, higher overhead, worst deal in terms of insurance—then a lot of people will say, "Well, I might as well take advantage of the public option." But it will be the choice of the individual. That's the second thing to emphasize.

The third thing to emphasize, and probably the most important thing to emphasize when you're talking to people about this—because most people have insurance, remember that. The people who don't have health insurance, they're already in favor of reform. But most Americans have health insurance. So the most important thing to describe to them is, this will be a set of consumer protections that provide you more safety and security. You know that you will be provided for if you get sick, because what we're going to do is we're going to say to insurance companies, you've got to do certain things, like admit people even if they've got preexisting conditions. You can't hide on—under the fine print a lot of terms that allow you to drop people when they get sick or exclude them from care.

In fact, the House bill actually has a provision that says insurance companies, if they want to participate in the exchange, they can only charge 15 percent in profits and administrative costs. The rest of the care has to go to actually making people well. So that'll be a cost control element.

But the point is, is that all these forces taken together will help people know that when they pay their premiums and they've got health insurance, that in fact it's there when they need it, and that they can count on it, and they're not going to be jerked around.

And over time, because of the cost-savings measures that we're putting in place—for example, making sure that prevention and wellness is covered—we're actually going to reduce the costs of health care overall over the long term. And that's going to be equally important, because eventually, that's going to show up in your paychecks in lower premiums. Because right now Americans are paying five to six thousand dollars more per person in health care costs than any other advanced nation. So not only do these other countries have universal care, but they're paying five to six thousand dollars less per person. We're not getting a good deal.

And so nobody is talking about a Government takeover of health care. We are talking about making sure that people are getting a good deal for the premiums that they're already paying. And I think that argument, most of the time, will win the day. I was just on a conservative talk show this morning—or this afternoon, and a woman called in, and she said, "You know, I have to admit that I'm glad you explained how this public option works, because I thought your whole plan was just the public option."

A lot of people just have a lot of misinformation, partly because, let's face it, health care is complicated, and, you know, it's subject then to a lot of misinformation out there. And that's why your efforts are so important.

So thank you, Cindy, wherever you are.

Mr. Stewart. All right. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. All right.

Mr. Stewart. We have our second question, and our second question comes from the telephone.

Senior Citizens and Health Care Reform/ Medicare

Q. Our second question comes from a caller over the phone. Connie Lind is a volunteer leader from Florida. Go ahead, Connie.

The President. Connie, can you hear me?

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President.

The President. Hi, Connie.

Q. Hi, Mr. President. Good afternoon. I'd like to thank you for taking my question. My name is Connie Lind, and I live in Dania, Florida. I live in Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz's district. [*Laughter*] I'm a retired health care administrator. I was a neighborhood team leader during your campaign, and now I'm the new OFA community organizer. My question, sir: Are we winning support from Members of Congress? Do you think we're making a difference, sir?

The President. Well, listen, the fact is, you've already got one of the best Members of Congress, so if you talk to her, you're kind of preaching to the choir—[*laughter*]—especially since she's sitting here right now. [*Laughter*] But can I just say that even if you live in a strongly Democratic district where there's a strong progressive Member of Congress who's already in favor of health care reform, convincing people more broadly about the need for reform still makes a difference, because, unfortunately, Washington is obsessed with the snap poll; they are obsessed with what is played in—on talk radio or what's said at a town hall meeting. You can have 20 really civil, sensible town hall meetings, but if there's one where somebody is screaming, you know which one is going to get on television.

And so every single person that you talk to whose mind is changed is going to make a difference. And in your congressional district, I think Debbie would confirm there are a lot of senior citizens. Seniors right now are the most worried of any population group about health reform. They are the ones who are most nervous. And it's understandable: A, because seniors need more health care than anybody else, and they already have good health care under Medicare. And so their general attitude is, I don't want change; I just want to make sure that you're not taking away what I already have.

And that's why it's so important to emphasize to seniors, Connie, that you're talking to that we are not reducing benefits under Medicare, that we think Medicare is a sacred trust. In fact, part of what we want to do is strengthen Medicare by closing the doughnut hole that is making prescription drugs really costly for those who need prescription drugs most and by extending the life of the Medicare trust fund over time, because right now we are spending money on things like subsidies to profitable insurance companies. About $17 billion a year is taken out of Medicare to pay to insurance companies who are already making a big profit without any competitive bidding whatsoever because they're running a portion of Medicare called Medicare Advantage.

Now, if we just have them compete, have them bid for participation, even if you still included them as a potential provider, that alone would save us $17 billion a year. And that would extend the life of the Medicare trust fund.

So you've really got to emphasize, I think, to seniors that, number one, nobody is talking about messing with your Medicare benefits; and number two, reminding seniors that, at the same time, you've got kids or you've got grandkids, they need to make sure that they've got the same security that Medicare provides seniors. There are a lot of people who are 50, don't yet—in their mid-fifties right now, don't qualify for Medicare, may have lost their job that used to provide health care. It is almost impossible for some of them to get health care because they've already had maybe a heart attack, maybe they've had an incident of cancer, maybe they've had some sort of other preexisting condition that makes insurers want to shy away from them. Their attitude is, no, we'll take the young, healthy ones, and that way we never have to pay out, and we make more profit. And that's part of what we want to change as well, and you've just got to remind

seniors that there are a lot of their family members who deserve the same kind of security that they have. Nobody is talking about taking their—away their security. We just want to expand that security to more people.

Okay, great question, Connie. Next question. *Mr. Stewart*. Cindy.

Misinformation Concerning Health Care Reform

Q. Our third question comes from Brandy, an OFA summer organizer in Phoenix, Arizona, who submitted her question over Twitter. She writes: "There are too many lies about health insurance reform: 'death panels,' rationing, you name it. Where are these lies from? I want people to know the truth."

The President. Well, look, we know where these lies are coming from. [*Laughter*] I mean, I don't think it's any secret. If you just flick channels, you'll—and then stop on certain ones—[*laughter*]—then you'll see, you know, you'll see who's propagating this stuff.

I said during the campaign that the best offense against lies is the truth. And so all we can do is just keep on pushing the truth. The truth is, there's no plan that has ever been considered under health care reform in Congress that covers illegal immigrants. Nobody's proposed that. And yet a huge percentage believe that that's the case. So anybody listening right now, let's dispel that myth.

There are no plans under health reform to revoke the existing prohibition on using Federal taxpayer dollars for abortions. We're not—nobody is talking about changing that existing provision, the Hyde amendment. Let's be clear about that. It's just not true.

Let's be clear about the fact that nobody has proposed anything remotely close to a Government takeover of health care. None of the plans that are out there, the most liberal, progressive plans that have come forward and come out of committee—all of them presume that if you've got private health insurance, you can keep your health insurance. Nobody is talking about getting between you and your doctor and interfering with that relationship. What we have said is, we don't want Government bureaucrats interfering in that relationship; we also don't want insurance company bureaucrats interfering with that relationship.

The "death panel" idea—the genesis of this—I mean, this is an interesting example of sort of tracing how misinformation spreads. There was a provision in the House bill that very sensibly said, you know, a lot of people towards the end of their life, they haven't prepared with things like a living will, they don't understand what their options are in terms of hospice, and we should reimburse people if they want that counseling voluntarily. If they want it, that's something that Medicare should reimburse for. It shouldn't just be wealthy people who get good counseling and information about how to handle their affairs during a very difficult time.

So that voluntary provision that permits reimbursement, which, by the way, Republicans had supported previously—this was previously considered a bipartisan concept—a Republican Senator, former Republican House Member, introduced a even—a much more aggressive bill on this issue in the prescription drug bill passed by the Republican Members of Congress. They had a similar provision for terminally ill patients. So this used to be just a sensible thing that everybody could agree to—suddenly became "death panels" and scared grandma. [*Laughter*] And it's just irresponsible.

And I have to say, part of the reason it spreads is the way reporting is done today. If somebody puts out misinformation, "Obama's Creating Death Panels," then the way the news report comes across is: "Today such and such accused President Obama of putting forward death panels. The White House responded that that wasn't true." And then they go on to the next story. And what they don't say is, in fact, it isn't true. [*Laughter*]

I mean, there's never any—I just—you know, it's fine to have a debate back and forth—he said, she said—except when somebody else is just not even telling remotely the truth. Then you should say in your reports, oh, and by the way, that's just not true. [*Laughter*]

But that doesn't happen often enough. And that's why it's so important that all of you deliver that message, and you've got to be able to back it up. And all of you are receiving materials

where it's not just us saying this; I mean, these are third-party validators who are out there and can set the facts straight. And when people get the facts and you show them, then most people will end up being persuaded.

Not everybody. There are going to be some people who—look, there are some people who, for partisan reasons, just want to see this go down because they see this—they see a replay of 1993, you know, if we can beat a health care bill like we did with Bill Clinton, then we'll be able to take over the House, you know, next year. There's some of that.

And then there are some people who just ideologically, they just don't believe in Government getting involved in anything. And that's a respectable position. I mean, there's a long American tradition of saying, "Government, just leave me alone and get off my back." And those folks are consistent, and they were critical of Bush when he got involved in Government, and they're critical of me in terms of being—believing that Government can do some good. And I think there you can have a honest, philosophical debate, and they're just not going to agree with it.

But the majority of Americans understand we don't want Government in all our business, but there are certain sensible reforms that we can pass so that consumers are protected, so that the market is working the way it should, so that the American people are getting a fair deal. Those are the people that we're trying to persuade. And I think if the majority of the people have the facts, then in fact they will be on our side. Okay?

All right, next question. Now we can just go to the audience members here, and we'll start with this gentleman right here.

Bipartisan Cooperation on Health Care Reform

Q. Mr. President, I'm Charles Cuttle. I'm from North Carolina, and thank you for turning North Carolina blue. It's been a long time. I have two wonderful children, and I have four beautiful grandchildren. And so I'm working for them, and I'm working for people who, unlike me, don't have health insurance—it's unconscionable.

Now, you've been outrageous—ly good—[*laughter*]—let me be clear—[*laughter*]—in trying to get a bipartisan bill through this Congress, and you've got three wonderful Republicans willing to stand with you. But America needs this to happen, and you know that. So where are you going to go from here?

The President. Well, let me—we don't know yet whether we've got any Republican support. We've got three Republicans who've been working very diligently. Charles Grassley, Mike Enzi, and Olympia Snowe have been working in the Senate Finance Committee with Max Baucus, the Senate Finance chairman, the Democrat, to see if we can craft a bipartisan bill coming out of the Senate Finance Committee. I give those three Republicans a lot of credit because they're under enormous pressure not to engage in any kind of negotiations at all. And in the current political climate, they are showing some significant resolve.

I don't know if in the end they can get there. I hope they can. And we're going to just continue to wait to see if they can get a product done. But at some point in the process, there's going to have to be a conclusion that either they can get a bill done or they can't get a bill done. And my commitment to the American people is to get a good product, which will include Republican ideas, but I have no control over what the other side decides is their political strategy. And my obligation to the American people says, we're going to get this done one way or another. All right?

All right. I'm going to—you guys have been to my town hall meetings so you know I always go boy, girl, boy, girl. [*Laughter*] So—all right.

Paying for Health Care Reform

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. My name is Teresa McRae, and I am from Virginia, another State that flipped from red to blue. I live in Spotsylvania County, and it's a rural county, but when I talk to people as a community organizer for OFA, it all comes down to money. And I may suggest, well, there's long-term benefits and quality health care, but they come back to me and say, "Well, what's going to stop people from being in their employer-based

health care and just quickly move over into the Government health care? And who's going to pay for it?" What do I say?

The President. Okay. Well, it's a great question. There are a couple of issues involved here. The first issue is, how are we paying for health care reform generally? Now, one thing that's very important to remind people, because you notice there's been a talking point from opponents—"trillion-dollar health care bill"—they love repeating that—"trillion-dollar health care bill."

First of all, it's important to remind people that when they say "trillion dollars," they're talking about over 10 years. So this—we're talking about $100 billion a year, which is still a significant amount of money, but just to give you a sense of perspective, I mean, the amount of money that we're spending in Iraq and Afghanistan is—what's the latest figure, Debbie? You figure 9—8 to 9 billion dollars a month, right? So the—for about the same cost per year as we've been spending over the last 5 to 6 years, we could have funded this health care reform proposal, just to give you a sense of perspective. That's point number one.

Point number two: About two-thirds of the costs are actually going to be paid for from money that's already in the health care system that taxpayers are already paying for, but is not a good deal. So it's reallocating money that's being wasted right now, taxpayer money that's being wasted right now, and using it in a way that actually makes people healthier. That's point number two.

So remember I told you about those subsidies that we're providing to insurance companies? That's an example. Another example is the way we reimburse hospitals right now. We don't incentivize hospitals to get their patients the best treatment the first time out, because if a patient is immediately readmitted, well, we just pay them the same rate as they were the first time.

Now, think about if your car needed repairs, and you sent it in—it got fixed—you thought. A week later, the same thing breaks down. When you went back to the auto shop, you'd probably want them to give you a little discount on fixing it the second time. But we don't do that right now with respect to hospitals. And those are the kinds of changes that we can make that would pay for about two-thirds of the cost of health reform.

That leaves one-third, and we do have to pay for that. I actually think that we're going to get even more savings with prevention and wellness, but unfortunately, we can't count that. It's not, in congressional lingo, "scoreable." We can't—nobody gives us credit for it because it's not provable how much money we'd save on those things, even though everybody understands that the investment we're making in prevention and wellness and health IT are going to make a difference.

So a third of it we're going to have to pay for. And what I've proposed was that we would pay for it by having people over $250,000 a year have their itemized deductions go to the same rate as everybody else's: 28 percent. Right now they get more because their marginal tax rates are a little bit higher. And if we just went back to their deductions that existed under Ronald Reagan—that radical—[*laughter*]—then we could pay for all of the health care reform that we're talking about.

Now, there are other ideas that are being floated out there both in the House and the Senate. But the bottom line is, what we're really talking about is about 30 to 40 billion dollars a year that we've got to come up with. And I am absolutely committed—and you can say this to people—President is absolutely committed to making sure that that is not funded on the backs of middle class families. We're trying to help middle class families and give them additional resources to get health insurance. We're not trying to add to their tax burden. Okay? So that's very important.

Now, there was another question that you asked, though, and that is, how do I know that my employer is not just going to dump me into the public plan? Well, there are actually provisions in the law that say if your employer is already providing you with good health insurance, then you can't just send your employee over into some sort of public option. It's what's called a firewall. And so there are provisions to prevent that kind of shift.

Now, there are going to be a lot of employers, small-business owners, who immediately are going to qualify for signing up for the health insurance exchange, because right now they can't afford to provide their health insurance to their employees at all. And we want to make sure that they are getting some help, partly because small businesses, they don't have any purchasing power when it comes to insurance companies. If you've only got 5 employees or 10 employees or 15 employees, and you go to an insurance company and say, "I want to get a good insurance policy," they're not going to give you a great deal, compared to if Xerox shows up with its thousands of employees. And so when a small business joins this plan, they are going to be able to pool their purchasing power with all the small businesses and individuals out there who don't currently have health insurance, and that will help drive down cost.

Okay. All right, who's next? This gentleman right here.

Health Care Reform/Public and Private Health Insurance

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. My name is Michael Pearlmutter. I'm from Durham, North Carolina. I'm the cochairperson of Durham for Obama's health care committee. We have 11,000 members.

The President. Great.

Q. And all of my volunteers say the same thing: They're behind reduced cost, they're behind guaranteed choice, they're behind health care for all. And they believe, and I believe, that the only way to do this is to guarantee a public option available to anybody who wants one. And my question is, if that's the solution that you believe in, why aren't we pushing it harder? And if that's not the solution, what other solutions out there would accomplish all three goals that you have?

The President. Well, it's a great question, and this is an example of sort of a controversy that has been somewhat manufactured this week. So let me just be clear: I continue to support a public option. I think it is important, and I think it will help drive down costs and give consumer choices.

The only thing that we have said, and this continues to be the truth—and I mean, sometimes you can fault me maybe for being honest to a fault—is that the public option is just one component of a broader plan. So let's just talk—let's just use the example of making sure that insurance companies are treating their customers right.

One way that we're doing this in this health reform bill is very directly through insurance reforms. We're saying to them, you have to take people with preexisting conditions; you cannot have caps on lifetime expenses or yearly expenses that people bump up against and suddenly have to pull out a lot of money out of pocket that they may not have. So we're putting in place a whole bunch of insurance reforms that regulate the behavior of insurance companies.

Now, alongside that, if there's a public option that is also offering a good deal to consumers, then the insurance companies have to look over their shoulder, and they say, "Gosh, you know, if the public option is providing that good deal to consumers, then maybe we can't just charge exorbitant rates and then mistreat our consumers." So it gives them a benchmark from which to operate.

Now, my point is, this is sort of like the belt-and-suspenders concept, to keep up your pants. You know, the insurance reforms are the belt; the public option can be the suspenders. And what we're trying to just suggest to people is, is that all these things are important, and that if the debate ends up being focused on just one aspect of it, then we're missing the boat.

If all we're talking about is the public option, then the 80 percent of the American people who already have health insurance in the private insurance market, they say to themselves, "Well, what's in it for me?" Their attitude will be, "This is not relevant to me," and in fact they start getting scared thinking, "Maybe what the public option means is that you're going to force me to give up my current private insurer and go into a public option."

That's what those who are opposed to reform have been counting on, is to try to twist the debate and feed into Americans' natural

suspicion about Government and to use that to cloud the fact that right now people are not getting a good deal from their insurance companies.

So I just want to make sure that we're focusing on all the elements of reform—what will benefit people without health insurance, what will benefit small businesses, what will benefit people who do have health insurance—so that we can build the largest coalition possible to finally get this done. Okay?

All right, go ahead. Here, you got a mike right behind you.

Wellness Programs/Healthy Lifestyles

Q. Thank you. Hello, Mr. President. I'm Katina Rojas Joy. I was a convention delegate——

The President. Good to see you, Katina.

Q. ——Prince George's County, Maryland. I have a two-part question. One is choice, the choice that we make to eat the foods that we eat and the lifestyle that we choose to engage in. And the second part—your family is very fit. What do you and the First Lady and the girls do to encourage physical fitness, and what can we—not the Government, not private corporations—do to encourage activity in the public school system and in young people?

The President. Well, this is a great question. Look, this is an interesting statistic. If we went back to the obesity rates that existed back in the 1980s, the Medicare system over several years could save as much as a trillion dollars. I mean, that's how much our obesity rate has made a difference in terms of diabetes and heart failure and all sorts of preventable diseases.

And so what we want to do is to, first of all, in health care reform, in the legislation, encourage prevention and wellness programs by saying that any health care plan out there has to provide for free checkups, prevention, and wellness care. That's got to be part of your deal, part of your package. And that way nobody has got an excuse not to go in and get a checkup.

Now, even if we do all that—and there are a lot of businesses out there that on their own are already providing incentives to their employees. Safeway, for example, is a company that has given financial incentives to employees to make sure that they are taking care of themselves and getting regular checkups and mammograms and colonoscopies and so forth, and it has saved them a lot of money in the terms of their premiums. So there's a financial incentive for a lot of businesses to get in the business of prevention and wellness.

But you're absolutely right that even if we've got legislation, even if companies are encouraging it, part of what we also have to do, though, is teach our children early the importance of health. And that means that all of us have to, in our communities, in our places of worship, in our school systems, encourage nutrition programs, provide young people outdoor activities that give them exercise. Michelle and I always talk about the fact, when we were kids during the summer, you know, basically, mom just said "See ya" after breakfast—[*laughter*]—you were gone. [*Laughter*] You might run in, get some lunch, go back out, and you wouldn't be back till dinner. And that whole time, all you're doing is moving.

Now, unfortunately, times have changed. Sometimes safety concerns prevent kids from doing that. Sometimes there are a lot of kids just don't have a playground. Little Leagues may be diminished. That means that we as adults in the community may have to provide more and more outlets for young people to get the kind of exercise that they need.

When it comes to food, one of the things that we are doing is working with school districts, and the child nutrition legislation is going to be coming up. We provide an awful lot of school lunches out there and reimburse local school districts for school lunch programs. Let's figure out how can we get some fresh fruits and vegetables in the mix, because sometimes you go into schools, and you know what the menu is. You know, it's french fries, Tater Tots, hot dogs, pizza. Now that's what kids—let's face it, that's what kids want to eat anyway. [*Laughter*] So it's not just the school's fault: A, that's what kids may want to eat; B, it turns out that that food is a lot cheaper because of the distributions that we've set up. And so what we've got to do is to change how we think about, for example, getting local farmers connected to school districts, because that would benefit the farmers delivering fresh produce. But right now they

just don't have the distribution mechanisms set up.

So, you know, Michelle set up that garden in the White House. One of the things that we're trying to do now is to figure out, can we get a little farmer's market outside of the White House—I'm not going to have all y'all just tromping around—[*laughter*]—but right outside the White House so that we can—and that is a win-win situation. It gives, suddenly, DC more access to good, fresh food, but it also is this enormous potential revenue maker for local farmers in the area. And that—those kinds of connections can be made all throughout the country and has to be part of how we think about health. Okay.

Mr. Stewart. Sir, sir, we have time for one more question.

The President. One more question, all right. This gentleman gets the last question here. Here, you got a microphone right there.

Health Insurance for Young Adults

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Fred Smalls, the city of Laurel, Maryland. Mr. President, there is a large number of young adults who are trying to figure out where they fall into the health reform plan. Many of them are too old to be continued carrying on their parents' insurance plan, yet they may be underemployed and cannot afford good health care. How does your plan account for these young people?

The President. Well, it's a great question. Look, first of all, one of the things that we've proposed is to extend the number of years that young people can stay on their parents' insurance plan to 25 or 26. That then fills the gap between college, where typically they can get health care, and those first few jobs they get. I remember my first few jobs—[*laughter*]—and you know, you're broke. [*Laughter*] And a lot of times they're not giving you any health care. And if they do offer you health care, you're opting out of it because you're trying to buy food—[*laughter*]—which you think is important for your health. [*Laughter*] So being able to stay on a parent's health care plan a little bit later, until you've got a more stable job, that can help pull in a whole lot of young people.

Now, after that, it turns out that young people are actually relatively cheap to insure. And so them being part of this pool, part of the exchange where they can go directly and buy health insurance, they will be able to get a premium that's priced comparable to if they worked for a big company. Now, it's still going to cost them some money. And there are going to be some young people out there who still would opt, you know, prefer, even if they can afford it, just not to get health insurance. And this is where there are going to be some young people who may be frustrated, because what we're going to tell them is, you know what, we don't want to treat you in the emergency room where everybody else has to subsidize you if you get hit by a truck. So you are going to have to buy some minimal coverage, just like you have to do with auto insurance, to make sure that at the very least, you're protected against some sort of catastrophic illness and that you're also able to get some regular checkups. But it will be affordable based on a sliding scale based on their income.

And then there are going to be hardship exemptions. There are going to be some folks who fall in a different category. They may be a little bit older. They're quite poor. But even with the subsidies, they still just can't afford health insurance. And we may have to give some hardship exemptions to folks like that, where basically we say to you, okay, if you make—you have the option of buying insurance at, let's say, 10 percent of your income. But if you are just in such a strapped situation that you just can't afford that, then you are exempted. Okay?

So here is my closing message, everybody. The easiest thing to do as a politician is to do nothing. You don't offend anybody. You say all the right things. You don't rock the boat. Your poll numbers go up. Everybody in Washington says, "Boy, that guy is a great politician." [*Laughter*] "Look at his poll numbers." [*Laughter*] And you can get away with doing that for years. But that's not why I came here. And that's not why you worked so hard to win this election. You came here because you knew that America can be a little fairer, a little more just, a little more efficient; we can

provide better health care coverage; we can make sure that we use less foreign oil and develop clean energy here in the United States; that we can make our school system work for every child and not just some, and produce more scientists and engineers that are going to be the key to unlocking a 21st-century economy.

We understood that we're human and government is a human enterprise, so it's imperfect, but we can do better than we've been doing. And this debate that we're having right now, this health care debate, is a test to that proposition. There are a whole bunch of folks in this town who were just waiting for this debate to take place, because the storyline they want to write about is, all the naive, idealistic folks—"change we can believe in," "yes we can"—that all their hopes were dashed, because this is a tough, cynical town, and we are going to be able to show them that basically you can't get anything done in this town. You can't change things. Everything always immediately becomes partisan. Government's way too complicated and Congress is way too paralyzed and the special interests are way too powerful to bring about meaningful, big changes that help the American people.

That's the storyline they're operating on, but that's the storyline we've been fighting against this entire time. From the day we announced this race, we were fighting against that. And they have been trying to write that story again and again and again. We are not going to give up now. We are not going to give up now. We are going to get this done and show the American people that Government can work for them.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:45 p.m. at Democratic National Committee Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to volunteer Beth Kimbriel, Chester, VA, who introduced the President; Gov. Timothy M. Kaine of Virginia; and Sen. Johnny Isakson.

Remarks on the Presidential and Provincial Elections in Afghanistan and an Exchange With Reporters

August 21, 2009

The President. Good afternoon, everybody. I want to say a few words about this week's election in Afghanistan. This was an important step forward in the Afghan's people's efforts to take control of their future, even as violent extremists are trying to stand in their way.

This election was run by the Afghan people. In fact, it was the first democratic election run by Afghans in over three decades. More than 30 Presidential candidates and more than 3,000 Provincial council candidates ran for office, including a record number of women. Some 6,000 polling stations were open around the country, and Afghan National Security Forces took the lead in providing security.

Over the last few days, and particularly yesterday, we've seen acts of violence and intimidation by the Taliban, and there may be more in the days to come. We knew that the Taliban would try to derail this election. Yet even in the face of this brutality, millions of Afghans exercised the right to choose their leaders and determine their own destiny. And as I watched the election, I was struck by their courage in the face of intimidation and their dignity in the face of disorder.

There is a clear contrast between those who seek to control their future at the ballot box and those who kill to prevent that from happening. Once again, extremists in Afghanistan have shown themselves willing to murder innocent Muslims—men, women, and children—to advance their aims. But I believe that the future belongs to those who want to build, not those who want to destroy. And that is the future that was sought by the Afghans who went to the polls and the Afghan National Security Forces who protected them.

The United States did not support any candidate in this election. Our only interest was the result fairly, accurately reflecting the will of the Afghan people. And that is what we will

continue to support as the votes are counted and we wait for the official results from the Afghan independent electoral commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission.

Meanwhile, we will continue to work with our Afghan partners to strengthen Afghan security, governance, and opportunity. Our goal is clear: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida and their extremist allies. That goal will be achieved—and our troops will be able to come home—as Afghans continue to strengthen their own capacity and take responsibility for their own future.

Our men and women in uniform are doing an extraordinary job in Afghanistan; so are the civilians who serve by their side. All of them are in our thoughts and prayers, as are their families back home. This is not a challenge that we asked for; it came to our shores when Al Qaida launched the 9/11 attacks from Afghanistan. But America, our allies and partners, and above all, the Afghan people share a common interest in pursuing security, opportunity, and justice.

We look forward to renewing our partnership with the Afghan people as they move ahead under a new Government. I want to again congratulate the Afghanistan people on carrying out this historic election and wish them a blessed month as they come together to welcome the beginning of Ramadan.

Thanks very much, everybody.

Release of Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed Al-Megrahi

Q. What about the hero's welcome in Libya, sir?

Q. Do you consider Libya a terrorist state, sir?

The President. I think it was highly objectionable.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:39 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. A reporter referred to Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed Al-Megrahi, a Libyan intelligence officer convicted of murder at the Scottish Court in the Netherlands on December 21, 1988, for the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Videotaped Remarks on the Observance of Ramadan
August 21, 2009

On behalf of the American people, including Muslim communities in all 50 States, I want to extend best wishes to Muslims in America and around the world: *Ramadan Kareem*.

Ramadan is the month in which Muslims believe the Koran was revealed to the prophet Muhammad, beginning with a simple word, *iqra*. It is therefore a time when Muslims reflect upon the wisdom and guidance that comes with faith and the responsibility that human beings have to one another and to God.

Like many people of different faiths who have seen Ramadan through our communities and families, I know this to be a festive time, a time when families gather and meals are shared. But I also know that Ramadan is a time of intense devotion and reflection, a time when Muslims fast during the day and perform *tarawih* prayers at night, reciting and listening to the entire Koran over the course of the month.

These rituals remind us of the principles that we hold in common and Islam's role in advancing justice, progress, tolerance, and the dignity of all human beings. For instance, fasting is a concept shared by many faiths, including my own Christian faith, as a way to bring people closer to God and to those among us who cannot take their next meal for granted. And the support that Muslims provide to others recalls our responsibility to advance opportunity and prosperity for people everywhere. For all of us must remember that the world we want to build and the changes that we want to make must begin in our own hearts and our own communities.

This summer, people across America have served in their communities, educating children, caring for the sick, and extending a hand

to those who have fallen on hard times. Faith-based organizations, including many Islamic organizations, have been at the forefront in participating in this summer of service. And in these challenging times, this is a spirit of responsibility that we must sustain in the months and years to come.

Beyond America's borders, we're also committed to keeping our responsibility to build a world that is more peaceful and secure. That's why we're responsibly ending the war in Iraq. That's why we are isolating violent extremists while empowering the people in places like Afghanistan and Pakistan. And that is why we strongly and actively support a two-state solution that recognizes the rights of Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace and security. That's also why America will always stand for the universal rights of all people to speak their mind, practice their religion, contribute fully to their society, and have confidence in the rule of law.

All of these efforts are a part of America's commitment to engage Muslims and Muslim-majority nations on the basis of mutual interest and mutual respect. And at this time of renewal, I want to reiterate my commitment to a new beginning between America and Muslims around the world.

As I said in Cairo, this new beginning must be borne out in a sustained effort to listen to each other, to learn from each other, to respect one another, and to seek common ground. I believe an important part of this is listening, and in the last 2 months, American Embassies around the world have reached out not just to governments, but directly to people in Muslim-majority countries. And from around the world, we have received an outpouring of feedback about how America can be a partner on behalf of peoples' aspirations.

We have listened, and like you, we are focused on pursuing concrete actions that will make a difference over time, both in terms of the political and security issues that I have discussed and in the areas that you have told us will make the most difference in peoples' lives.

These consultations are helping us implement the partnerships that I called for in Cairo, to expand education exchange programs, to foster entrepreneurship and create jobs, and to increase collaboration on science and technology, while supporting literacy and vocational learning. We're also moving forward in partnering with the OIC and the OIC member states to eradicate polio, while working closely with the international community to confront the common health challenges like H1N1, which I know is of particular concern to many Muslims preparing for the Hajj.

All of these efforts are aimed at advancing our common aspirations: to live in peace and security, to get an education and to work with dignity, to love our families, our communities, and our faith. It will take time and patient effort. We cannot change things overnight, but we can honestly resolve to do what must be done, while setting off in a new direction, toward the destination that we seek for ourselves and for our children. That is the journey that we must travel together.

I look forward to continuing this critically important dialogue and turning it into action. And today I want to wish Muslims across America and around the world a blessed month as you welcome the beginning of Ramadan. May God's peace be upon you.

NOTE: The President's remarks were videotaped at 1:45 p.m. on August 13 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for later broadcast. In the address, the President referred to OIC, the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The Office of the Press Secretary also released Arabic, Bengali, Dari, French, Hindi, Indonesian, Pashto, Persian, Punjabi, Russian, Turkish, and Urdu language transcripts of these remarks.

The President's Weekly Address
August 22, 2009

Each and every day in this country, Americans are grappling with health care premiums that are growing three times the rate of wages and insurance company policies that limit

coverage and raise out-of-pocket costs. Thousands are losing their insurance coverage each day.

Without real reform, the burdens on America's families and businesses will continue to multiply. We've had a vigorous debate about health insurance reform, and rightly so. This is an issue of vital concern to every American, and I'm glad that so many are engaged.

But it also should be an honest debate, not one dominated by willful misrepresentations and outright distortions, spread by the very folks who would benefit the most by keeping things exactly as they are. So today I want to spend a few minutes debunking some of the more outrageous myths circulating on the Internet, on cable TV, and repeated at some town halls across this country.

Let's start with the false claim that illegal immigrants will get health insurance under reform. That's not true. Illegal immigrants would not be covered. That idea has never even been on the table. Some are also saying that coverage for abortions would be mandated under reform—also false. When it comes to the current ban on using tax dollars for abortions, nothing will change under reform. And as every credible person who has looked into it has said, there are no so-called death panels—an offensive notion to me and to the American people. These are phony claims meant to divide us.

And we've all heard the charge that reform will somehow bring about a Government takeover of health care. I know that sounds scary to many folks; it sounds scary to me too. But here's the thing: It's not true. I no sooner want Government to get between you and your doctor than I want insurance companies to make arbitrary decisions about what medical care is best for you, as they do today. As I've said from the beginning, under the reform we seek, if you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor; if you like your private health insurance plan, you can keep your plan, period.

Now, the source of a lot of these fears about Government-run health care is confusion over what's called the public option. This is one idea among many to provide more competition and choice, especially in the many places around the country where just one insurer thoroughly dominates the marketplace. This alternative would have to operate as any other insurer, on the basis of the premiums it collects. And let me repeat: It would just be an option; those who prefer their private insurers would be under no obligation to shift to a public plan.

The insurance companies and their allies don't like this idea or any that would promote greater competition. I get that. And I expect there would be a lot of discussion about it when Congress returns. But this one aspect of the health care debate shouldn't overshadow the other important steps we can and must take to reduce the increasing burdens families and businesses face.

So let me stress them again: If you don't have insurance, you will finally have access to quality coverage you can afford. If you do have coverage, you will benefit from more security and more stability when it comes to your insurance. If you move, lose your job, or change jobs, you will not have to worry about losing health coverage. And we will set up tough consumer protections that will hold insurance companies accountable and stop them from exploiting you with unfair practices.

We'll prohibit insurance companies from denying coverage because of a person's medical history. They will not be able to drop your coverage if you get sick. They will not be able to water down your coverage when you need it most. They will no longer be able to place some arbitrary cap on the amount of coverage you can receive in a given year or a lifetime. We'll place a limit on how much you can be charged for out-of-pocket expenses, because no one in America should go broke because they get sick.

And we will require insurance companies to cover routine checkups and preventive care, like mammograms and colonoscopies. There's no reason we shouldn't be catching diseases like breast cancer and colon cancer on the front end. That makes sense, it saves lives, and it will also save money over the long run. Taken together, the reforms we're seeking will help bring down skyrocketing costs, which will

mean real savings for families, businesses, and Government.

We know what a failure to act would bring: More of the same; more of the same exploding costs; more of the same diminished coverage. If we fail to act, the crisis will grow. More families will go without coverage. More businesses will be forced to drop or water down their plans.

So we can push off the day of reckoning and fail to deal with the flaws in the system, just as Washington has done year after year, decade after decade. Or we can take steps that will provide every American family and business a measure of security and stability that they lack today.

It's never been easy moving this Nation forward. There are always those who oppose it and those who use fear to block change. But what has always distinguished America is that when all the arguments have been heard and all the concerns have been voiced and the time comes to do what must be done, we rise above our differences, grasp each other's hands, and march forward as one Nation and one people, some of us Democrats, some of us Republicans, all of us Americans.

This is our chance to march forward. I can't promise you that the reforms we seek will be perfect or make a difference overnight. But I can promise you this: If we pass health insurance reform, we will look back many years from now and say, this was the moment we summoned what's best in each of us to make life better for all of us. This was the moment when we built a health care system worthy of the Nation and the people we love. This was the moment we earned our place alongside the greatest generations. And that is what our generation of Americans is called to do right now.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5 p.m. on August 20 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on August 22. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 21, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on August 22.

Remarks on the Reappointment of Ben S. Bernanke as Chairman of the Federal Reserve in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

August 25, 2009

The President. Good morning, everybody. I apologize for interrupting the relaxing that I told all of you to do, but I have an important announcement to make concerning the Federal Reserve.

The man next to me, Ben Bernanke, has led the Fed through one of the worst financial crises that this Nation and the world has ever faced. As an expert on the causes of the Great Depression, I'm sure Ben never imagined that he would be part of a team responsible for preventing another. But because of his background, his temperament, his courage, and his creativity, that's exactly what he has helped to achieve, and that is why I am reappointing him to another term as chairman of the Federal Reserve.

Ben approached a financial system on the verge of collapse with calm and wisdom, with bold action and out-of-the-box thinking that has helped put the brakes on our economic freefall. And almost none of the decisions that he or any of us made have been easy. The actions we've taken to stabilize our financial system, to repair our credit markets, restructure our auto industry, and pass a recovery package have all been steps of necessity, not choice. They've faced plenty of critics, some of whom argued that we should stay the course or do nothing at all. But taken together, this "bold, persistent experimentation" has brought our economy back from the brink. They're steps that are working. Our recovery plan has put tax cuts in people's pockets, extended health care and unemployment insurance to those who have borne the brunt of this recession, and is continuing to save and create jobs that otherwise would have been lost. Our auto industry is showing signs of life. Business investment is showing signs of stabilizing.

Our housing market and credit markets have been saved from collapse.

Of course, as I've said before, we are a long way away from completely healthy financial systems and a full economic recovery. And I will not let up until those Americans who are looking for jobs can find them, until qualified businesses, large and small, who need capital to grow can find loans at a rate they can afford, and until all responsible mortgage holders can stay in their homes. And that's why we need Ben Bernanke to continue the work he's doing, and that's why I've said that we cannot go back to an economy based on overleveraged banks, inflated profits, and maxed-out credit cards. For even as we've taken steps to rescue our financial system and our economy, we must now work to rebuild a new foundation for growth and prosperity. We have to build an economy that works for every American, and one that leads the world in innovation, in investments, and in experts—exports.

Part of that foundation has to be a financial regulatory system that ensures we never face a crisis like this again. We've already seen how lax enforcement and weak regulation can lead to enormous wealth for a few and enormous pain for everybody else. And that's why even though there is some resistance on Wall Street for those who would prefer to keep things the way they are, we will pass the reforms necessary to protect consumers, investors, and the entire financial system. And we will continue to maintain a strong and independent Federal Reserve.

We will also keep working towards the reform of a health insurance system whose costs and discriminatory practices are bankrupting our families, our businesses, and our Government. We will continue to build a clean energy economy that creates the jobs and industries of the future within our borders. And we will give our children and our workers the skills and training they need to compete for these jobs in the 21st century.

And much like the decisions we've made so far, the steps we take to build this new foundation will not be easy; change never is. As Ben and I both know, it comes with debate and disagreement and resistance from those who prefer the status quo. And that's all right, because that's how democracy is supposed to work. But no matter how difficult change is, we will pursue it relentlessly because it is absolutely necessary to lift this country up and create an economy that leads to good jobs, broad growth, and a future our children can count on. That's what we're here to do, and that's what we will continue to do in the months ahead. So I want to congratulate Ben on the work that he's done so far, wish him continued success in the hard work that he has before him. Thank you so much, Ben.

[*At this point, Chairman Bernanke made brief remarks.*]

The President. Thank you. Great job.
Chairman Bernanke. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:55 a.m. at Oak Bluffs School Filing Center. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Chairman Bernanke.

Remarks on the Death of Senator Edward M. Kennedy from Chilmark, Massachusetts
August 26, 2009

I wanted to say a few words this morning about the passing of an extraordinary leader, Senator Edward Kennedy.

Over the past several years, I've had the honor to call Teddy a colleague, a counselor, and a friend. And even though we have known this day was coming for some time now, we awaited it with no small amount of dread.

Since Teddy's diagnosis last year, we've seen the courage with which he battled his illness. And while these months have no doubt been difficult for him, they've also let him hear

from people in every corner of our Nation and from around the world just how much he meant to all of us. His fight has given us the opportunity we were denied when his brothers John and Robert were taken from us: the blessing of time to say thank you and goodbye.

The outpouring of love, gratitude, and fond memories to which we've all borne witness is a testament to the way this singular figure in American history touched so many lives. His ideas and ideals are stamped on scores of laws and reflected in millions of lives: in seniors who know new dignity, in families that know new opportunity, in children who know education's promise, and in all who can pursue their dream in an America that is more equal and more just, including myself.

The Kennedy name is synonymous with the Democratic Party. And at times, Ted was the target of partisan campaign attacks. But in the United States Senate, I can think of no one who engendered greater respect or affection from members of both sides of the aisle. His seriousness of purpose was perpetually matched by humility, warmth, and good cheer. He could passionately battle others and do so peerlessly on the Senate floor for the causes that he held dear, and yet still maintain warm friendships across party lines.

And that's one reason he became not only one of the greatest Senators of our time but one of the most accomplished Americans ever to serve our democracy. His extraordinary life on this Earth has come to an end. And the extraordinary good that he did lives on. For his family, he was a guardian. For America, he was the defender of a dream.

I spoke earlier this morning to Senator Kennedy's beloved wife Vicki, who was to the end such a wonderful source of encouragement and strength. Our thoughts and prayers are with her, his children Kara, Edward, and Patrick, his stepchildren Curran and Caroline, the entire Kennedy family, decades' worth of his staff, the people of Massachusetts, and all Americans who, like us, loved Ted Kennedy.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:57 a.m. at Blue Heron Farm.

Statement on the Death of Senator Edward M. Kennedy
August 26, 2009

Michelle and I were heartbroken to learn this morning of the death of our dear friend Senator Ted Kennedy.

For five decades, virtually every major piece of legislation to advance the civil rights, health, and economic well being of the American people bore his name and resulted from his efforts.

I valued his wise counsel in the Senate, where, regardless of the swirl of events, he always had time for a new colleague. I cherished his confidence and momentous support in my race for the Presidency. And even as he waged a valiant struggle with a mortal illness, I've profited as President from his encouragement and wisdom.

An important chapter in our history has come to an end. Our country has lost a great leader, who picked up the torch of his fallen brothers and became the greatest United States Senator of our time. And the Kennedy family has lost their patriarch, a tower of strength and support through good times and bad. Our hearts and prayers go out to them today, to his wonderful wife Vicki, his children Ted, Jr., Patrick, and Kara, his grandchildren, and his extended family.

The President's Weekly Address
August 29, 2009

This weekend marks the fourth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina's devastation of the Gulf Coast. As we remember all that was lost, we must take stock of the work being done on recovery, while preparing for future disasters.

And that's what I want to speak with you about today.

None of us can forget how we felt when those winds battered the shore, the floodwaters began to rise, and Americans were stranded on rooftops and in stadiums. Over a thousand people would lose their lives. Over a million people were displaced. Whole neighborhoods of a great American city were left in ruins. Communities across the Gulf Coast were forever changed, and many Americans questioned whether government could fulfill its responsibilities to respond in a crisis or contribute to a recovery that covered parts of four States.

Since taking office in January, my administration has focused on helping citizens finish the work of rebuilding their lives and communities, while taking steps to prevent similar catastrophes going forward. Our approach is simple: Government must keep its responsibility to the people so that Americans have the opportunity to take responsibility for their own future.

That's the work that we're doing. To date, 11 members of my Cabinet have visited the Gulf Coast, and I'm looking forward to going to New Orleans later this year. To complete a complex recovery that addresses nearly every sector of society, we have prioritized coordination among different Federal agencies and with State and local governments. No more turf wars; all of us need to move forward together, because there's much more work to be done.

I've also made it clear that we will not tolerate the redtape that stands in the way of progress or the waste that can drive up the bill. Government must be a partner, not an opponent, in getting things done. And that's why we've put in place innovative review and dispute-resolution programs to expedite recovery efforts and have freed up hundreds of millions of dollars of Federal assistance that had not been distributed. This is also allowing us to move forward with stalled projects across the Gulf Coast building and improving schools, investing in public health and safety, and repairing broken roads, bridges, and homes. And this effort has been dramatically amplified by the Recovery Act, which has put thousands of Gulf Coast residents to work.

As we complete this effort, we see countless stories of citizens holding up their end of the bargain. In New Orleans, hundreds of kids just started the school year at Langston Hughes Elementary, the first school built from scratch since Katrina. The St. Bernard Project has drawn together volunteers to rebuild hundreds of homes, where people can live with dignity and security. To cite just one hopeful indicator, New Orleans is the fastest growing city in America, as many who've been displaced are now coming home.

As we rebuild and recover, we must also learn the lessons of Katrina so that our Nation is more protected and resilient in the face of disaster. That means continuing to rebuild hundreds of miles of levees and floodwalls around New Orleans and working to strengthen the wetlands and barrier islands that are the Gulf Coast's first line of defense. In Washington, that means a focus on competence and accountability, and I'm proud that my FEMA Administrator has 25 years of experience in disaster management in Florida, a State that has known its share of hurricanes. And across the country, that means improving coordination among different agencies, modernizing our emergency communications, and helping families plan for a crisis.

On this anniversary, we are focused on the threat from hurricanes. But we must also be prepared for a broad range of dangers, from wildfires to earthquakes to terrorist attacks and pandemic disease. In particular, my administration is working aggressively with State and local governments, and with partners around the world, to prepare for the risk posed by the H1N1 virus. To learn more about the simple steps that you can take to keep you and your family safe from all these dangers, please visit www.ready.gov.

So on this day, we commemorate a tragedy that befell our people, but we also remember that with every tragedy comes the chance of renewal. It's a quintessentially American notion that adversity can give birth to hope and that the lessons of the past hold the key to a better future. From the streets of New

Orleans to the Mississippi coast, folks are beginning the next chapter in their American stories. And together, we can ensure that the legacy of a terrible storm is a country that is safer and more prepared for the challenges that may come. Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:30 a.m. on August 20 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on August 29. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 28, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on August 29. In the address, the President referred to W. Craig Fugate, Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Eulogy at the Funeral Service for Senator Edward M. Kennedy in Boston, Massachusetts

August 29, 2009

Your Eminence, Vicki, Kara, Edward, Patrick, Curran, Caroline, members of the Kennedy family, distinguished guests, and fellow citizens: Today we say goodbye to the youngest child of Rose and Joseph Kennedy. The world will long remember their son Edward as the heir to a weighty legacy, a champion for those who had none, the soul of the Democratic Party, and the lion of the United States Senate, a man who graces nearly 1,000 laws and who penned more than 300 laws himself.

But those of us who loved him and ache with his passing know Ted Kennedy by the other titles he held: father; brother; husband; grandfather; Uncle Teddy, or as he was often known to his younger nieces and nephews, "the Grand Fromage," or "the Big Cheese." I, like so many others in the city where he worked for nearly half a century, knew him as a colleague, a mentor, and above all, as a friend.

Ted Kennedy was the baby of the family who became its patriarch, the restless dreamer who became its rock. He was the sunny, joyful child who bore the brunt of his brothers' teasing but learned quickly how to brush it off. When they tossed him off a boat because he didn't know what a jib was, 6-year-old Teddy got back in and learned to sail. When a photographer asked the newly elected Bobby to step back at a press conference because he was casting a shadow on his younger brother, Teddy quipped, "It'll be the same in Washington."

That spirit of resilience and good humor would see Teddy through more pain and tragedy than most of us will ever know. He lost two siblings by the age of 16. He saw two more taken violently from a country that loved them. He said goodbye to his beloved sister, Eunice, in the final days of his life. He narrowly survived a plane crash, watched two children struggle with cancer, buried three nephews, and experienced personal failings and setbacks in the most public way possible.

It's a string of events that would have broken a lesser man. And it would have been easy for Ted to let himself become bitter and hardened, to surrender to self-pity and regret, to retreat from public life and live out his years in peaceful quiet. No one would have blamed him for that.

But that was not Ted Kennedy. As he told us: "[I]ndividual faults and frailties are no excuse to give in and no exemption from the common obligation to give of ourselves." Indeed, Ted was the "Happy Warrior" that the poet Wordsworth spoke of when he wrote:

> As tempted more; more able to endure,
> As more exposed to suffering and distress;
> Thence, also, more alive to tenderness.

Through his own suffering, Ted Kennedy became more alive to the plight and the suffering of others: the sick child who could not see a doctor; the young soldier denied her rights because of what she looks like or who she loves or where she comes from. The landmark laws that he championed—the Civil Rights Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, immigration reform, children's health insurance, the Family and Medical Leave Act—all have a running thread: that's Kennedy's life work was not to champion the causes of those with wealth or power or special connections; it was to give a

voice to those who were not heard, to add a rung to the ladder of opportunity, to make real the dream of our founding. He was given the gift of time that his brothers were not, and he used that gift to touch as many lives and right as many wrongs as the years would allow.

We can still hear his voice bellowing through the Senate Chamber, face reddened, fists pounding the podium, a veritable force of nature, in support of health care or workers' rights or civil rights. And yet, as has been noted, while his causes became deeply personal, his disagreements never did. While he was seen by his fiercest critics as a partisan lightning rod, that's not the prism through which Ted Kennedy saw the world, nor was it the prism through which his colleagues saw Ted Kennedy. He was a product of an age when the joy and nobility of politics prevented differences of party and platform and philosophy from becoming barriers to cooperation and mutual respect, a time when adversaries still saw each other as patriots.

And that's how Ted Kennedy became the greatest legislator of our time. He did it by hewing to principle, yes, but also by seeking compromise and common cause, not through deal-making and horse-trading alone, but through friendship and kindness and humor. There was the time he courted Orrin Hatch for support of the Children's Health Insurance Program by having his chief of staff serenade the Senator with a song Orrin had written himself, the time he delivered shamrock cookies on a china plate to sweeten up a crusty Republican colleague, the famous story of how he won the support of a Texas committee chairman on an immigration bill. Teddy walked into a meeting with a plain manila envelope and showed only the chairman that it was filled with the Texan's favorite cigars. When the negotiations were going well, he would inch the envelope closer to the chairman. [*Laughter*] When they weren't, he'd pull it back. [*Laughter*] Before long, the deal was done. [*Laughter*]

It was only a few years ago, on St. Patrick's Day, when Teddy buttonholed me on the floor of the Senate for my support of a certain piece of legislation that was coming up for a vote. I gave him my pledge, but I expressed skepticism that it would pass. But when the roll call was over, the bill garnered the votes that it needed and then some. I looked at Teddy with astonishment and asked how had he done it. He just patted me on the back and said, "Luck of the Irish." [*Laughter*]

Of course, luck had little to do with Ted Kennedy's legislative success; he knew that. A few years ago, his father-in-law told him that he and Daniel Webster just might be the two greatest Senators of all time. Without missing a beat, Teddy replied, "What did Webster do?" [*Laughter*]

But though it is Teddy's historic body of achievements that we will remember, it is his giving heart that we will miss. It was the friend and the colleague who was always the first to pick up the phone and say, "I'm sorry for your loss," or, "I hope you feel better," or, "What can I do to help?" It was the boss so adored by his staff that over 500, spanning five decades, showed up for his 75th birthday party. It was the man who sent birthday wishes and thank-you notes and even his own paintings to so many who never imagined that a U.S. Senator of such stature would take the time to think about somebody like them. I have one of those paintings in my private study off the Oval Office, a Cape Cod seascape that was a gift to a freshman legislator who had just arrived in Washington and happened to admire it when Ted Kennedy welcomed him into his office. That, by the way, is my second gift from Teddy and Vicki after our dog Bo. And it seems like everyone has one of those stories, the ones that often start with "You wouldn't believe who called me today."

Ted Kennedy was the father who looked not only after his own three children, but John's and Bobby's as well. He took them camping and taught them to sail. He laughed and danced with them at birthdays and weddings, cried and mourned with them through hardship and tragedy, and passed on that same sense of service and selflessness that his parents had instilled in him. Shortly after Ted walked Caroline down the aisle and gave her away at the altar, he received a note from Jackie that read: "On you the carefree youngest

brother fell a burden a hero would have begged to have been spared. We are all going to make it because you were always there with your love."

Not only did the Kennedy family make it because of Ted's love, he made it because of theirs, especially because the love and the life he found in Vicki. After so much loss and so much sorrow, it could not have been easy for Ted to risk his heart again. And that he did is a testament to how deeply he loved this remarkable woman from Louisiana. And she didn't just love him back. As Ted would often acknowledge, Vicki saved him. She gave him strength and purpose, joy and friendship, and stood by him always, especially in those last, hardest days.

We cannot know for certain how long we have here. We cannot foresee the trials or misfortunes that will test us along the way. We cannot know what God's plan is for us. What we can do is to live out our lives as best we can with purpose and with love and with joy. We can use each day to show those who are closest to us how much we care about them and treat others with the kindness and respect that we wish for ourselves. We can learn from our mistakes and grow from our failures. And we can strive at all costs to make a better world so that someday, if we are blessed with the chance to look back on our time here, we know that we spent it well, that we made a difference, that our fleeting presence had a lasting impact on the lives of others.

This is how Ted Kennedy lived. This is his legacy. He once said, as has already been mentioned, of his brother Bobby that he need not be idealized or enlarged in death because what he was in life, and I imagine he would say the same about himself. The greatest expectations were placed upon Ted Kennedy's shoulders because of who he was, but he surpassed them all because of who he became. We do not weep for him today because of the prestige attached to his name or his office. We weep because we loved this kind and tender hero who persevered through pain and tragedy, not for the sake of ambition or vanity, not for wealth or power, but only for the people and the country that he loved.

In the days after September 11th, Teddy made it a point to personally call each one of the 177 families of this State who lost a loved one in the attack. But he didn't stop there. He kept calling and checking up on them. He fought through redtape to get them assistance and grief counseling. He invited them sailing, played with their children, and would write each family a letter whenever the anniversary of that terrible day came along. To one widow, he wrote the following: "As you know so well, the passage of time never really heals the tragic memory of such a great loss, but we carry on, because we have to, because our loved ones would want us to, and because there is still light to guide us in the world from the love they gave us." We carry on.

Ted Kennedy has gone home now, guided by his faith and by the light of those that he has loved and lost. At last he is with them once more, leaving those of us who grieve his passing with the memories he gave, the good that he did, the dream he kept alive, and a single, enduring image, the image of a man on a boat, white mane tousled, smiling broadly as he sails into the wind, ready for whatever storms may come, carrying on toward some new and wondrous place just beyond the horizon. May God bless Ted Kennedy, and may he rest in eternal peace.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:35 p.m. at the Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. In his remarks, he referred to Sean P. Cardinal O'Malley, Archbishop of Boston; and Victoria R. Kennedy, wife, Kara Kennedy Allen, daughter, Caroline R. Raclin, stepdaughter, Edward M. Kennedy, Jr., and Patrick J. Kennedy II, sons, G. Curran Raclin, stepson, Edmund M. Reggie, father-in-law, and Caroline B. Kennedy, niece, of Senator Kennedy.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting an Alternative Plan for Pay Increases for Civilian Federal Employees

August 31, 2009

Dear Madam Speaker: (Mr. President:)

I am transmitting an alternative plan for pay increases for civilian Federal employees covered by the General Schedule (GS) and certain other pay systems in January 2010.

Under title 5, United States Code, civilian Federal employees covered by the GS and certain other pay systems would receive a two-part pay increase in January 2010: (1) a 2.4 percent across-the-board adjustment in scheduled rates of basic pay derived from Employment Cost Index data on changes in the wages and salaries of private industry workers, and (2) locality pay adjustments averaging 16.5 percent based on Bureau of Labor Statistics salary surveys of non-Federal employers in each locality pay area. According to the statutory formula, for Federal employees covered by the locality pay system, the overall average pay increase would be about 18.9 percent. This total Federal employee pay increase would cost about $22.6 billion in fiscal year 2010 alone.

Title 5, United States Code, authorizes me to implement an alternative pay plan if I view the adjustments that would otherwise take effect as inappropriate due to "national emergency or serious economic conditions affecting the general welfare." For the reasons described below, I have determined that it is appropriate to exercise my statutory alternative plan authority to set an alternative January 2010 across-the-board pay increase. If needed, I will provide a plan for locality pay rates by the statutory deadline of November 30.

A national emergency, within the meaning of chapter 53 of title 5, has existed since September 11, 2001. Likewise, with unemployment at 9.5 percent in June to cite just one economic indicator, few would disagree that our country is facing serious economic conditions affecting the general welfare. The growth in Federal requirements is straining the Federal budget. Full statutory civilian pay increases costing $22.6 billion in 2010 alone would put even more stress on our budget. Such an increase would cost $19.9 billion more than the 2.0 percent overall Federal civilian pay increase that I proposed in my 2010 Budget and would build in later years.

Accordingly, I have determined that under the authority of section 5303(b) of title 5, United States Code, an across-the-board increase of 2.0 percent shall go into effect on the first day of the first applicable pay period beginning on or after January 1, 2010.

Finally, the law requires that I include in this report an assessment of the impact of my decision on the Government's ability to recruit and retain well-qualified employees. I do not believe this decision will materially affect our ability to continue to attract and retain a quality Federal workforce. To the contrary, since any pay raise above the amount proposed in this alternative plan would likely be unfunded, agencies would have to absorb the additional cost and could have to reduce hiring to pay the higher rates. Moreover, the GS "quit" rate continues to be very low (2.1 percent on an annual basis), well below the overall average "quit" rate in private enterprise. Should the need arise, the Government has many compensation flexibilities, such as recruitment and retention incentives, and special salary rates, to maintain the high quality workforce that serves our Nation.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

Remarks on H1N1 Influenza Preparedness and Response
September 1, 2009

Good afternoon, everybody. Before I say a few words about the meeting we just had, I'd like to mention some good news that came out today about our economy. Now, for the first time in 18 months, our manufacturing sector has expanded, and the statistics used to measure manufacturing output is the highest it's been in over 2 years.

This means greater production of transportation equipment like cars and electronic equipment like computers and appliances, and it means these companies are starting to invest more and produce more, and it is a sign that we're on the path to economic recovery.

And there's no doubt that we have a long way to go, and I and the other members of this administration will not let up until those Americans who are looking for jobs can find them. But this is another important sign that we're heading in the right direction and that the steps we've taken to bring our economy back from the brink are working.

Now, we just had a good meeting about our ongoing efforts to prepare this country for the H1N1 flu virus this fall. And I want to thank John Brennan; our CDC Director, Tom Frieden; and Secretaries Sebelius, Napolitano, Duncan, and Locke for all the good work that they've been doing to get us ready today.

As I said when we saw the first cases of this virus back in the spring, I don't want anybody to be alarmed, but I do want everybody to be prepared. We know that we usually get a second, larger wave of these flu viruses in the fall, and so response plans have been put in place across all levels of government. Our plans and decisions are based on the best scientific information available, and as the situation changes, we will continue to update the public.

And we're also making steady progress on developing a safe and effective H1N1 flu vaccine, and we expect a flu shot program will begin soon. This program will be completely voluntary, but it will be strongly recommended.

For all that we do in the Federal Government, however, every American has a role to play in responding to this virus. We need State and local governments on the frontlines to make antiviral medications and vaccines available and be ready to take whatever steps are necessary to support the health care system. We need hospitals and health care providers to continue preparing for an increased patient load and to take steps to protect health care workers. We need families and businesses to ensure that they have plans in place if a family member, a child, or a coworker contracts the flu and needs to stay home.

And most importantly, we need everyone to get informed about individual risk factors, and we need everyone to take the commonsense steps that we know can make a difference. Stay home if you're sick; wash your hands frequently; cover your sneezes with your sleeve, not your hands; and take all the necessary precautions to stay healthy. I know it sounds simple, but it's important, and it works. Finally, for people who want to learn more about this virus, please go to www.flu.gov or talk to your doctor.

I want to commend every member of our team. I think we've done an extraordinary job in preparing for this flu outbreak. We anticipate that there will be some issues coming up over the next several months. The way it's moving is still somewhat unpredictable, but what I'm absolutely confident about is that our team that's assembled here has done an extraordinary job in preparing for whatever may happen.

So we appreciate all of you for being here, and I want to publicly again thank you for all your extraordinarily hard work. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:13 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John O. Brennan; Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius; Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano; Secretary of Education Arne Duncan; and Secretary of Commerce Gary F. Locke.

Remarks at the Iftar Dinner
September 1, 2009

The President. Please, everybody, have a seat. Thank you. Well, it is my great pleasure to host all of you here at the White House to mark this special occasion. *Ramadan Kareem*.

Audience members. Ramadan Kareem.

The President. I want to say that I'm deeply honored to welcome so many members of the diplomatic corps, as well as several members of my administration and distinguished Members of Congress, including the first two Muslims to serve in Congress, Keith Ellison and Andre Carson. Where are they? Give them a big round of applause.

Just a few other acknowledgements I want to make. We have Senator Richard Lugar here, who's our ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Where is Dick Lugar? There he is; thank you. Representative John Conyers, chairman of the Judiciary Committee; Representative Rush Holt is here. Thank you, Rush. Have we found you a seat, Rush? [*Laughter*]

Representative Rush D. Holt. I'm on my way to the train. [*Laughter*]

The President. I got you. [*Laughter*]

Rep. Holt. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. We also have here—Secretary of Defense Gates is here, Secretary Gates; our Attorney General, Eric Holder; and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius is here.

And most of all, I want to welcome all the American Muslims from many walks of life who are here. This is just one part of our effort to celebrate Ramadan and continues a long tradition of hosting iftars here at the White House.

For well over a billion Muslims, Ramadan is a time of intense devotion and reflection. It's a time of service and support for those in need. And it is also a time for family and friends to come together in a celebration of their faith, their communities, and the common humanity that all of us share. It is in that spirit that I welcome each and every one of you to the White House.

Tonight's iftar is a ritual that is also being carried out this Ramadan at kitchen tables and mosques in all 50 States. Islam, as we know, is part of America. And like the broader American citizenry, the American Muslim community is one of extraordinary dynamism and diversity, with families that stretch back generations and more recent immigrants, with Muslims of countless races and ethnicities, and with roots in every corner of the world.

Indeed, the contribution of Muslims to the United States are too long to catalog because Muslims are so interwoven into the fabric of our communities and our country. American Muslims are successful in business and entertainment, in the arts and athletics, in science and in medicine. Above all, they are successful parents, good neighbors, and active citizens.

So on this occasion, we celebrate the holy month of Ramadan, and we also celebrate how much Muslims have enriched America and its culture, in ways both large and small. And with us here tonight, we see just a small sample of those contributions. Let me share a few stories with you briefly.

Elsheba Khan's son Kareem, made the ultimate sacrifice for his country when he lost his life in Iraq. Kareem joined the military as soon as he finished high school. He would go on to win the Purple Heart and Bronze Star, along with the admiration of his fellow soldiers. In describing her son, Elsheba said, "He always wanted to help any way that he could." Tonight, he's buried alongside thousands of heroes in Arlington National Cemetery. A crescent is carved into his grave, just as others bear the Christian cross or the Jewish star. These brave Americans are joined in death as they were in life, by a common commitment to their country and the values that we hold dear.

And one of those values is the freedom to practice your religion, a right that is enshrined in the First Amendment of the Constitution. Nashala Hearn, who joins us from Muskogee, Oklahoma, took a stand for that right at an early age. When her district—school district told her that she couldn't wear the *hijab*, she

protested that it was a part of her religion. The Department of Justice stood behind her, and she won her right to practice her faith. She even traveled to Washington to testify before Congress. Her words spoke to a tolerance that is far greater than mistrust; when she first wore her headscarf to school, she said, "I received compliments from the other kids."

Another young woman who has thrived in her school is Bilqis Abdul-Qaadir. She's not even 5′5″—where's Bilqis? Right here. Stand up, Bilqis, just so that we—[*laughter*]—I want everybody to know—she's got heels on. She's 5′5″—Bilqis broke Rebecca Lobo's record for the most points scored by any high school basketball player in Massachusetts history. She recently told a reporter, "I'd like to really inspire a lot of young Muslim girls if they want to play basketball. Anything is possible. They can do it too." As an honor student, as an athlete on her way to Memphis, Bilqis is an inspiration not simply to Muslim girls, she's an inspiration to all of us.

Of course, we know that when it comes to athletes who have inspired America, any list would include the man known simply as "The Greatest." And while Muhammad Ali could not join us tonight, it is worth reflecting upon his remarkable contributions, as he's grown from an unmatched fighter in the ring to a man of quiet dignity and grace who continues to fight for what he believes, and that includes the notion that people of all faiths hold things in common. I love this quote. A few years ago, he explained this view—and this is part of why he's "The Greatest"—saying, "Rivers, ponds, lakes, and streams—they all have different names, but they all contain water. Just as religions do—they all contain truths."

They all contain truths. Among those truths are the pursuit of peace and the dignity of all human beings. That must always form the basis upon which we find common ground. And that is why I am so pleased that we are joined tonight not only by so many outstanding Muslim Americans and representatives of the diplomatic corps, but people of many faiths—Christians, Jews, and Hindus—along with so many prominent Muslims.

Together, we have a responsibility to foster engagement grounded in mutual interest and mutual respect. And that's one of my fundamental commitments as President, both at home and abroad. That's the—that is central to the new beginning that I've sought between the United States and Muslims around the world. And that is a commitment that we can renew once again during this holy season.

So tonight we celebrate a great religion and its commitment to justice and progress. We honor the contributions of America's Muslims and the positive example that so many of them set through their own lives. And we rededicate ourselves to the work of building a better and more hopeful world.

So thanks to all of you for taking the time to be here this evening. I wish you all a very blessed Ramadan. And with that, I think we can start a feast. I don't know what's on the menu, but I'm sure it will be good. [*Laughter*] Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:08 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Reps. Keith Ellison and Andre Carson; Rebecca Lobo, forward, Women's National Basketball Association Connecticut Sun; and Marty Dobrow, reporter, Boston Globe newspaper.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Designating Supplemental Funds To Enhance Capabilities To Combat the Global Influenza Outbreak

September 2, 2009

Dear Madam Speaker:

Within the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2009 (Public Law 111–32), Congress appropriated $7.65 billion to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for the 2009–H1N1 influenza outbreak, including a

$5.8 billion contingent appropriation for an influenza pandemic. As you know, my Administration is actively responding to H1N1 and has appropriately utilized the emergency appropriations that Congress provided for development and procurement of 2009–H1N1 vaccine, domestic and international surveillance activities, and continuing to prepare for an immunization campaign this fall.

On July 16, 2009, I designated $1.825 billion of the contingent appropriation as emergency funds required to address critical needs related to emerging influenza viruses (specifically, the virus known as 2009–H1N1). To further enhance our Nation's capability to respond to the potential spread of this outbreak, in accordance with the appropriation, I hereby designate an additional $2.716 billion to support the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Health and Human Services, State, and Veterans Affairs to support the procurement of vaccine product and supplies, antiviral medications, preparations for a vaccination campaign, and agency preparedness activities.

There continues to be much uncertainty about the severity of the outbreak this fall during the northern hemisphere flu season. A vaccine is under development and currently being tested for safety and efficacy. Results from the clinical trials, along with the latest information regarding the evolution of the 2009–H1N1 virus and the worldwide outbreaks, will inform our decisions regarding the national response.

We will communicate with you further in the future should additional funds be required.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

The President's Weekly Address
September 5, 2009

As we spend time with family and friends this Labor Day weekend, many of us will also be thinking about the state of working America. Yesterday we received a report showing that job losses have slowed dramatically compared to just a few months ago. Earlier in the week, we learned that the manufacturing sector has posted its first gains in 18 months and that many of the banks that borrowed money at the height of the financial crisis are now returning it to taxpayers with interest.

These are only the most recent signs that the economy is turning around, though these signs are of little comfort to those who've experienced the pain of losing a job in the previous month or in the previous 2 years of this recession. That's why it's so important that we remain focused on speeding our economic recovery. Throughout America today, tens of thousands of recovery projects are underway, repairing our Nation's roads, bridges, ports, and waterways, renovating schools, and developing renewable energy. We're putting Americans back to work doing the work America needs done, and mostly in private sector jobs.

But even as we take aggressive steps to put people back to work, it's also important that we keep faith with men and women looking back on a lifetime of labor, hard-working Americans who deserve to know that their efforts have resulted in a secure future, including a secure retirement. For this recession has not only led to the loss of jobs, but also the loss of savings. The drop in home values, for example, has also meant a drop in the value of the single largest investment most families have. And the decline in the financial markets has led to a decline in the value of 401(k)s and other sources of savings and retirement security. As a result, over the past 2 years, the American people have lost about $2 trillion in retirement savings.

This carries a painful toll. I've heard from so many who have had to put off retirement or come out of retirement to make ends meet. I've heard from seniors who worked hard their whole lives, but now, in their golden years, are unsure of where to turn to pay the bills, afford the prescriptions, or keep the home in which they raised a family. And having too little in savings not only leaves people financially ill-prepared

for retirement, but also for whatever challenges life brings. It places in jeopardy so many dreams, from owning a home to attending college.

The fact is, even before this recession hit, the savings rate was essentially zero, while borrowing had risen and credit card debt had increased. Many were simply struggling to stay afloat as incomes were stagnant or falling and jobs were scarce; that's important to remember. But there were also those who spent beyond their means. And more broadly, tens of millions of families have been, for a variety of reasons, unable to put away enough money for a secure retirement. Half of America's workforce doesn't have access to a retirement plan at work. And fewer than 10 percent of those without workplace retirement plans have one of their own.

We cannot continue on this course. And we certainly can't go back to an economy based on inflated profits and maxed-out credit cards, the cycles of speculative boom and painful busts, a system that put the interests of the short term ahead of the needs of long term. We have to revive this economy and rebuild it stronger than before. And making sure that folks have the opportunity and incentive to save—for a home or college, for retirement or a rainy day—is essential to that effort. If you work hard and meet your responsibilities, this country is going to honor our collective responsibility to you, to ensure that you can save and secure your retirement. That's why we're announcing several commonsense changes that will help families put away money for the future.

First, we're going to make it easier for small businesses to do what large businesses do: allow workers to automatically enroll in a 401(k) or an individual retirement account. We know that automatic enrollment has made a big difference in participation rates by making it simpler for workers to save, and that's why we're going to expand it to more people.

Second, we'll make it easier for people to save their Federal tax refunds, which 100 million families receive. Today, if you have a retirement account, you can have your refund deposited directly into your account. With this change, we'll make it easier for those without retirement plans to save their refunds as well. You'll be able to check a box on your tax return to receive your refund as a savings bond.

Third, we'll make it possible for employees to put payments for unused vacation and sick days into their retirement plans if they wish. Right now most workers don't have that option.

And fourth, the IRS and the Treasury Department are creating a plain English, easy-to-follow guide, as well as a web site, to help folks navigate what are often very complicated waters, especially for workers changing jobs, who often are unsure how best to continue saving for retirement, because the rules ought to be written to encourage people to save, instead of discouraging them.

We'll also build on these steps by working with Congress. As part of my budget, I've proposed ensuring that nearly every American has access to a retirement savings account through his or her job. This plan would make it possible for workers to automatically enroll in IRAs through payroll contributions. And the budget simplifies and expands a tax credit for millions of families, matching half of a family's savings up to $1,000 per year and depositing the tax credit directly into a retirement account.

This is a difficult time for our country, but I am confident that we can meet the challenges we face and leave behind something better, that we're ready to take responsibility for our future once again, as individuals and as a nation.

I hope that all of you have the chance to enjoy this Labor Day weekend with family and friends. But my larger hope and expectation is that next Labor Day, the economic storms we're weathering now will have given way to brighter and more prosperous times.

Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:55 p.m. on September 1 in the Library at the White House for broadcast on September 5. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 4, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on September 5.

Remarks at the AFL–CIO Labor Day Picnic in Cincinnati, Ohio
September 7, 2009

The President. Hello, Cincinnati! Thank you. Thank you, Ohio! Thank you. Thank you, labor! All righty. It is good to be back in Cincinnati; it's good to be back in Ohio; it's good to be back among great friends, great leaders. And I want everybody to give a big round of applause to Charlie Dilbert for that great introduction. And I want to thank Kathy Mattea and the band for the entertainment. Give Kathy a big round of applause.

How you all feeling today? Are you fired up? Are you ready to go? I can't think of a better place to be on Labor Day than at America's biggest Labor Day picnic and with the workers and families of the Cincinnati AFL–CIO.

I'm so proud to be on the stage with Charlie, because Charlie reminds us that in these tough times, America's working men and women are ready to roll up their sleeves and get back to work.

I want to salute your local AFL–CIO local leaders: Executive Secretary-Treasurer Doug Sizemore, President Joe Zimmer, State President Joe Rugola. And your outstanding national leaders: a man who we thank for devoting his life to working Americans, President John Sweeney—he's right there; and the man who will pick up the mantle, who will take the baton of leadership, who we need to succeed because a strong labor movement is part of a strong economy, Secretary-Treasurer Rich Trumka.

Although Ohio's wonderful Governor and great friend of mine Ted Strickland couldn't be here, we've got Lieutenant Governor Lee Fisher in the house, Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner, Attorney General Richard Cordray, Cincinnati Mayor Mark Mallory, Hamilton County commissioner—Commission President David Pepper.

We're joined by members of Ohio's outstanding congressional delegation: Congressman Steve Driehaus; and a great friend who is at the forefront of every fight for Ohio's working men and women, including the battle for health insurance reform, Senator Sherrod Brown.

I'm also proud to be here with a leader who is reenergizing the Department of Labor, who realizes that it's not the department of management, it's the Department of Labor, a daughter of union members, a daughter of a Teamster, Secretary Hilda Solis. My Director of Recovery for Auto Communities and Workers, Ed Montgomery, is in the house, and he's doing outstanding work.

Now, Cincinnati, like a lot of Americans, you're having some fun today, taking the day off, spending time with the kids. Some of you may be proud of your grilling skills. [*Laughter*] Every man thinks he can grill—[*laughter*]—whether he can or not. That's what Michelle says. [*Laughter*] Michelle says she's a better griller than me. I don't know. We'll have to have a grill-off someday. But you're enjoying some good music, some good food, some famous Cincinnati chili.

But today we also pause; we pause to remember and to reflect and to reaffirm. We remember that the rights and benefits we enjoy today weren't simply handed to America's working men and women. They had to be won. They had to be fought for, by men and women of courage and conviction, from the factory floors of the Industrial Revolution to the shopping aisles of today's superstores. They stood up, and they spoke out to demand a fair shake and an honest day's pay for an honest day's work. Many risked their lives. Some gave their lives. Some made it a cause of their lives, like Senator Ted Kennedy, who we remember today.

So let us never forget: Much of what we take for granted—the 40-hour work week, the minimum wage, health insurance, paid leave, pensions, Social Security, Medicare—they all bear the union label. It was the American worker—men and women just like you—who returned from World War II to make our economy the envy of the world. It was labor that helped build the largest middle class in history. Even if you're not a union member, every American owes something to America's labor movement.

So as we remember this history, let's reflect on its meaning in our own time. Like so many Americans, you work hard. You meet your responsibilities. You play by the rules. You pay your bills. But in recent years, the American Dream seems like it's been slipping away, because from Washington to Wall Street, too often a different attitude prevailed. Wealth was valued over work, selfishness over sacrifice, greed over responsibility. The right to organize was undermined rather than strengthened. That's what we saw. And it may have worked out well for those folks at the top, but it didn't work out for you, and it didn't work out well for our country. That culture and the policies that flowed from it undermined the middle class and helped create the greatest economic crisis of our time.

So today, on this Labor Day, we reaffirm our commitment to rebuild, to live up to the legacy of those who came before us, to combine the enduring values that have served us so well for so long—hard work and responsibility—with new ideas for a new century, to ensure that our great middle class remains the backbone of our economy, not just a vanishing ideal we celebrate at picnics once a year as summer turns to fall. We want it a reality for the families of Ohio and the families of America.

That's what we've been working to do ever since I took office. Now, I notice some people have already forgotten how bad it was just 7 months ago. You notice that? They've got, sort of, selective amnesia. [*Laughter*] So let's just remind them for a second: a financial system on the verge of collapse, about 700,000 workers losing their jobs each month, the worst recession of our lifetimes threatening to become another Great Depression.

That's what was happening just 7 months ago. And that's why we took bold, swift action. That's why we passed an unprecedented Recovery Act, and we did it without the usual Washington earmarks and porkbarrel spending. And, Ohio, it is working.

Times are still tough. Times are still tough; I know that. But we have given 95 percent of America's working families a tax cut—4.5 million families in Ohio, including here in Cincinnati—a promise we made during the campaign, a promise I kept as President of the United States.

We cut taxes for small businesses, made new loans to more than 1,000 small businesses in Ohio so they could grow and hire more workers. We extended unemployment benefits for 12 million Americans, including Charlie and nearly 570,000 Ohio citizens. Across America, we've saved the jobs of tens of thousands of State and local workers, including teachers and first-responders right here in Ohio. Don't take my word for it. Ask folks here in Ohio what they would have done if we hadn't passed the Recovery Act—the cuts they would have had to made, the taxes they would have had to raise.

We're rebuilding America's infrastructure, including improvements to I–75 in Hamilton County, led by a local Cincinnati contractor. We've got more than 200 other highway projects across Ohio, and we're making a historic commitment to innovation, much of it still to come in the months and years ahead: doubling our capacity to generate renewable energy, building a new smart grid to carry electricity from coast to coast, laying down broadband lines and high-speed rail lines and providing the largest boost in basic research in our history, all of which will put people back to work: steelworkers, plumbers, pipefitters, engineers, you name it.

So our recovery plan is working.

Audience member. What about the bricklayers?

The President. Bricklayers too. The financial system has been saved from collapse. Home sales are up. We're seeing signs of life in the auto industry. Business investment is starting to stabilize. For the first time in 18 months, we're seeing growth in manufacturing. When was the last time you heard that here in the United States of America?

Now, on Friday, we learned that the economy lost another 216,000 jobs in August. And whenever Americans are losing jobs, that's simply unacceptable. But for the second straight month, we lost fewer jobs than the month before, and it was the fewest jobs that we had lost in a year. So make no mistake, we're moving in the right direction. We're on the road to

recovery, Ohio. Don't let anybody tell you otherwise.

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. Yes we will. Yes we are.

Audience members. Yes we will! Yes we will! Yes we will!

The President. But, my friends, we still have got a long way to go. We're not going to rest; we're not going to let up. Not until workers looking for jobs can find them—good jobs that sustain families and sustain dreams. Not until responsible mortgage owners can stay in their homes. Not until we've got a full economic recovery and all Americans have their shot at the American Dream.

Now, we can't do that if we go back to that old economy: overleveraged banks, inflated profits, maxed-out credit cards, CEOs and bankers getting multimillion-dollar bonuses——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. ——an economy of bubbles and bursts, your wages and incomes stagnant while corporate profits soar. So even as we recover from the recession and work to cut the deficit, we have to build a new foundation for prosperity.

We need an America with a reformed financial system. We got to have regulations in place that protect consumers so that we never have a crisis like this again. I don't want to have to bail out any more banks, and we got to make sure we've got regulations in place to prevent it. An America where energy reform creates green jobs that can never be outsourced and that finally frees America from the grip of foreign oil. An America that commits to education, because the countries that outeducate us today will outcompete us tomorrow, and the best jobs will go to the best educated. So we got to do a better job educating our sons and our daughters. And, yes, I'm going to have something to say tomorrow to our children, telling them to stay in school and work hard, because that's the right message to send.

We need an America that once again invests in the middle class, which is why I've created our task force for middle class working families, led by my outstanding Vice President, Joe Biden, to make sure that our policies always benefit you, the American worker.

Today we're taking another step. I'm naming Ron Bloom, who's right here—raise your hand, Ron; he's right down in the front here. I'm naming Ron Bloom to lead our efforts to revitalize the sector that helped build the middle class: American manufacturing. Ron has worked with steelworkers, service employees, and management to create jobs. He helped guide our auto task force. And as my new point person on manufacturing, he's going to help us craft the policies that will create the next generation of great manufacturing jobs and ensure American competitiveness in the 21st century.

Oh and by the way, just in case you were wondering, we're also going to build an America where health reform delivers more stability and security to every American. We are going to reform the system for those who have insurance and those who don't. Now, I'll have a lot more to say about this on Wednesday night. I might have to save my voice a little bit—[*laughter*]—not get too excited. I don't want to give anything away. I want you all to tune in.

But let me just say a few things about this health care issue. We've been fighting for quality, affordable health care for every American for nearly a century, since Teddy Roosevelt. Think about that.

Audience member. Long time.

The President. Long time. [*Laughter*] The Congress and the country have now been vigorously debating the issue for many months. The debate's been good, and that's important because we've got to get this right. But every debate at some point comes to an end. At some point, it's time to decide. At some point, it's time to act. Ohio, it's time to act and get this thing done.

We have never been this close. We've never had such broad agreement on what needs to be done. And because we're so close to real reform, suddenly the special interests are doing what they always do, which is just try to scare the heck out of people.

But I've got a question for all these folks who say, you know, we're going to pull the plug on grandma and this is all about illegal immigrants and—you've heard all the lies. I've got a question for all those folks: What are you going to do? What's your answer? What's your solution? And you know what? They don't have one. Their answer is to do nothing. Their answer is to do nothing, and we know what that future looks like: insurance companies raking in the profits while discriminating against people because of preexisting conditions, denying or dropping coverage when you get sick. It means you're never negotiating about higher wages, because all you're spending your time doing is just trying to protect the benefits that you already fought for. It means premiums continuing to skyrocket three times faster than your wages. It means more families pushed into bankruptcy, more businesses cutting more jobs, more Americans losing health insurance, 14,000 every day. It means more Americans dying every day just because they don't have health insurance.

That's not the future I see for America. I see reform where we bring stability and security to folks who have insurance today, where you never again have to worry about going without coverage if you lose your job or you change your job or you get sick. You've got coverage there for you. Where there is a cap on your out-of-pocket expenses, so you don't have to worry that a serious illness will break you and your family even if you have health insurance. Where you never again have to worry that you or someone you love will be denied coverage because of a preexisting condition.

I see reform where Americans and small businesses that are shut out of health insurance today will be able to purchase coverage at a price they can afford. Where they'll be able to shop and compare in a new health insurance exchange, a marketplace where competition and choice will continue to hold down costs and help deliver them a better deal. And I continue to believe that a public option within that basket of insurance choices will help improve quality and bring down costs.

I see reform where we protect our senior citizens by closing the gaps in their prescription drug coverage under Medicare that costs older Americans thousands of dollars every years out of their pockets, reforms that will preserve Medicare and put it on a sounder financial footing and cut waste and fraud and the more than $100 billion in unwarranted public subsidies to already profitable insurance companies.

I want a health insurance system that works as well for the American people as it does for the insurance industry. They should be free to make a profit. But they also have to be fair; they also have to be accountable.

That's what we're talking about—security and stability for folks who have health insurance, help for those who don't—the coverage they need at a price they can afford, finally bringing costs under control. That's the reform that's needed, that's the reform we're fighting for, and that's why it's time to do what's right for America's working families and put aside partisanship, stop saying things that aren't true, come together as a nation, pass health insurance reform now, this year.

Few have fought harder and longer for health care in America's workers than you, our brothers and sisters of organized labor. And just as we know that we have to adapt to all the changes and challenges of a global economy, we also know this: In good economic times and in bad, labor is not the problem; labor is part of the solution.

That's why Secretary Solis made it her priority at the Labor Department to protect workers— your safety, your benefits, your right to organize, your right to bargain collectively. That's why some of the first Executive orders I issued overturned the previous administration's attempts to stifle organized labor. That's why I support EFCA, to level the playing field so it's easier for employees who want a union to form a union. Nothing wrong with that. Because when labor is strong, America's strong. When we all stand together, we all rise together.

That's why the first piece of legislation I signed into law was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, guaranteeing equal pay for equal work. Lilly works at a factory in Alabama. She did her job, and she did it well. And then, after nearly two decades, she discovered that for years she

was paid less than her male colleagues for doing the very same work. Over the years, she had lost hundreds of thousands of dollars in wages and in pension and Social Security benefits.

Now, Lilly could have just moved on. Instead, this Alabama grandmother made a decision. She said a principle was at stake. She stood up, and she spoke out for what was right, all the way to the Supreme Court and then Congress and finally the White House, where she stood next to me as I signed the law that bore her name.

Ohio, that's the lesson this day, that some things are worth fighting for: equal pay; fair wages; dignity in the workplace; justice on the job; an economy that works for everybody, because in America, there are no second-class citizens; an economy where you can make a living and care for your families, where you're leaving your kids something better, where we live up to our fundamental ideals. Those words put on paper some 200 years ago—that we're all created equal, that we all deserve a chance to pursue our happiness—that's the calling to which we are summoned this Labor Day. That's the cause of my Presidency. And that is the commitment we must fulfill to preserve the American Dream for all of America's working families.

But I'm going to need you to do it. At the beginning of this speech, I talked about whether you were fired up. I know that over the last couple months, the economy has been bad, the recession has been wearing on folks: people losing their jobs, people losing their health care, people losing their homes in some cases. It's been the usual bickering in Washington; doesn't seem like that ever stops. Pundits on TV, they're saying how, oh, this isn't working and that's not working. You know, you start getting into a funk, and whenever I see folks in that negative place, I always think back to a story I told during the campaign. Some of you have heard it. But I just thought I'd say it again.

It's about where the phrase "fired up" comes from. So this is when we were right at the beginning of the campaign for the Presidency; nobody gave us a chance; none of you all could pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] And I went down to South Carolina. I went down—I think I was—where was I? [*Laughter*] I was in Greenville—am I right?—Greenville. And the legislators were having a little banquet, and they had invited me to come down to speak. And I sat next to a State representative. I had nobody supporting me back then, so I had to ask everybody. I said, will you support my campaign for the Presidency of the United States? And this State rep looked me up and down, and she said, "You know, I will give you my endorsement if you come to my hometown at Greenwood, South Carolina."

Now, I had had a glass of wine, so I said right away, I said, "Okay." [*Laughter*] "Let's shake on it." Come to find out that Greenwood is about an hour and a half from everyplace else. [*Laughter*]

So about a month later, I fly in. I've been campaigning for 2 weeks straight, haven't seen my family, I'm exhausted, I'm tired. Get to the hotel room, I'm dragging my bag into my room, about to go to bed. I get a tap on my shoulder. It's my staff member, says, "Excuse me, sir." I said, "What?" [*Laughter*] He said, "You have to be in the car tomorrow at 6:30 in the morning." I said, "Why?" [*Laughter*] He said, "Because we got to go to Greenwood like you promised." [*Laughter*]

So the next day, I wake up, and I feel worse than when I went to bed. I stagger over to the window, open up the blinds—it's pouring down rain outside, ugly day. I go out, get my newspaper, open it up, there's a bad story about me in the New York Times. I pack up my stuff, I go downstairs. My umbrella breaks, and I get soaked. So that by the time I'm in the car, I'm sleepy, I'm wet, and I'm mad. [*Laughter*] And we start driving, and we just keep on driving—we're driving, we're driving, we drive—goes on forever—hour and a half we're driving.

Finally we get to Greenwood, although you don't know that you're in Greenwood right away. [*Laughter*] It's kind of—a lot of fields and—[*laughter*]. We pull up next to a little field house in a park, and I get back out, and I get a little more wet, and I go inside. And after this hour-and-a-half drive, lo and behold,

there are only 20 people inside. [*Laughter*] And most of them are wet and don't look like they really want to be there either. [*Laughter*]

So you know, I'm a professional. I go and shake everybody's hands, and I've got kind of a tight smile on my face. "How do you do? What do you do? Nice to meet you." Suddenly I hear this voice behind me shouting out: "Fired up?" And I'm surprised. I'm scared, almost. [*Laughter*] But everybody else acts like this was normal, and they all say, "Fired up!" "Ready to go?" People around me, they all say, "Ready to go!"

I don't know what's going on. I look behind me. There is a little woman. She couldn't be more than 5′2″.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Watch out—[*inaudible*]—you're little too. [*Laughter*] Little lady, she's about 50, 60 years old. She dressed like she just came from church. She got a big church hat. And she's smiling at me. She looks at me, and she says, "Fired up!"

Turns out this woman is a city council member from Greenwood who is famous for her chant. Every event she goes to, she likes chanting—she goes: "Fired up?" "Fired up!" "Ready to go?" "Ready to go!" And she does a little dance while she's doing it. [*Laughter*]

So for the next 5 minutes, it seems like, she just keeps on saying this little chant: "Fired up?" "Fired up!" "Ready to go?" "Ready to go!" And I'm standing there, and I'm thinking, this woman is upstaging me. [*Laughter*] I don't know what to do. I'm looking at my staff. I'm thinking, when is this thing going to be over? [*Laughter*]

But here's the thing, Ohio. After about a minute or two, I'm starting to feel kind of fired up. [*Laughter*] I'm starting to feel like I'm ready to go. So I start joining in the chant, and it's making me feel good. And for the rest of the day, whenever—we campaigned the whole day. Whenever I saw my staff, I said, "Are you fired up?" They said, "I'm fired up, boss. Are you ready to go?" I'd say, "I'm ready to go."

It just goes to show you how one voice can change a room. And if it can change a room, it can change a city. And if it can change a city, it can change a State. And if it can change a State, it can change a nation. And if it can change a nation, it can change the world. Your voice can change the world. Your voice will get health care passed. Your voice will make sure that the American worker is protected. You can build America. I need your help.

Thank you, Cincinnati. Are you fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. Fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. Fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. I love you. Bye-bye.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:24 p.m. at Coney Island. In his remarks, he referred to Charlie Dilbert, employee, A&A Road Safety, who introduced the President; entertainer Kathy Mattea; Director of Recovery for Auto Communities and Workers Edward B. Montgomery; Senior Counselor to the President for Manufacturing Policy Ron Bloom; South Carolina State Rep. J. Anne Parks; and Edith Childs, city council member, Greenwood, SC. The President also referred to H.R. 1409, the "Employee Free Choice Act of 2009" (EFCA).

Question-and-Answer Session With Students at Wakefield High School in Arlington, Virginia

September 8, 2009

The President. Thank you. So this is the first day of high school, huh?

Students. Yes.

The President. Wow. I'm trying to remember back to my first day of high school. I can't remember that far back. [*Laughter*] But it is great

to see all of you here. I'm really proud of my Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, who is just doing a great job trying to create an environment where all of you can learn. And I know it's a little intimidating with all these cameras around and all this——

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Don't pay them any attention.

The President. ——so just pretend that they're not there.

Here's the main reason I wanted to come by. As Arne pointed out, when I was growing up, my dad wasn't in the house. We weren't poor, but we weren't rich. My mother had to work really hard, so sometimes my grandparents had to fill in. And my wife Michelle, who all of you have seen—the First Lady—her dad worked in a—as a—basically in a blue-collar job, an hourly worker. Her mom worked as a secretary. And they lived in a tiny—they didn't even live in a house; they lived upstairs above her aunt's house. And so neither of us really had a whole lot when we were growing up, but the one thing that we had was parents who insisted on getting a good education.

And I want you to all know that despite the good home training I was getting, that when I was in 9th and 10th grade, I was still kind of a goof-off, and I didn't study as hard as I could have. I was a lot more concerned about basketball. I made some mistakes when I was in high school, wasn't as focused as I should have been. But the fact that my parents—that my mother and my grandparents had emphasized education allowed me to make up for some of those mistakes and still get into a good college. And when I got to college, I was then able to really bear down and focus on education.

Michelle, she was a good student the whole time. She was sort of a goody-two-shoes. [*Laughter*] And she just did well in high school, and then she went to college, and then she went to law school, and she just was always really organized and together.

But the point is, is that both of us were able to succeed not because of who our parents were, not because we came from a lot of wealth or because we had a lot of connections, but it was mainly just because we ended up getting into good schools, and we worked hard, and we did well.

All of you are in that same position. And as I look out at this class, I say to myself, you guys remind me of me and Michelle. And you're in the same position that we were; we were no different. You have the same opportunities that we had. The key is for you to seize those opportunities.

And the reason I wanted to come by to talk to students—and then we're going to talk to students all across the country—Arne is working really hard to make sure that your schools are well equipped. We're trying to get more money in the budget for things like computers, and we want to make sure that we're getting the very best teachers and that they're getting all the training they need, and we're doing everything we can as adults to give you a good learning situation. But ultimately, we can't force you to learn. Not even your parents can force you to learn. Ultimately, you've got to want to learn. You've got to realize that education is your ticket, and that education's not going to happen just because you show up, although showing up helps, so I want to make sure everybody——

Secretary Duncan. We're glad you're here.

The President. We're glad you're here. You've got to be hungry to want to learn more, whether—whatever the subject is. And if you have that hunger and that drive and that passion, you're going to do well. And if you don't, you know, you're just going to do okay; you'll be mediocre. And I don't think that's what any of you want for your lives.

So that's the main message that I wanted to send, is take advantage of the opportunity. If you are hungry for learning, you will find teachers that want to help you. You will—your parents will be there for you; the community will be there. You will be able to finance college. You will be able to get a good job. You will be able to have a successful career. But you've got to want it. And that's the main message that we wanted to send.

So with that, we've got about 20 minutes just to go back and forth. And I know, like I said, it's a little intimidating having these folks around. But it's not every day that you get a

chance to talk to the President. So—[*laughter*]—I'm not going to call on anybody. Just whoever has a question or a comment, a suggestion, an idea about what you think would make school better, things that you think make it tough for some kids, even if it's not you, but things that you've heard that you think we should know. Questions about Bo, my dog, that's okay too. [*Laughter*] Whatever comes to mind.

So who wants to start off? I know—there you go. That's what I'm talking about. Right here, we got a mike, so everybody can hear you. Introduce yourself.

Secretary Duncan. Stand up.

The Presidency

Q. How has your life changed?

The President. What's your name?

Q. Jimmy.

The President. Jimmy. How has my life changed?

Secretary Duncan. That's a good question.

The President. Well, you know, when you announce that you're running for President—first of all, I was a U.S. Senator before I was a President, so people already sort of knew me, but just in Illinois, in my home State, in Chicago. And when you announce that you're running for President, suddenly a lot more people know you. And then slowly you get Secret Service. And then when you win the nomination, you get more Secret Service. And then when you become President, then everything just shuts down. And so one of the biggest changes in my life is that I can't just do things normally like I used to be able to do them, and that's hard sometimes. I mean, I can't just get in my car, go to the store, pick up some—whatever it is that I feel like picking up. I can't go take a walk without shutting down a whole bunch of roads and really inconveniencing a lot of people. [*Laughter*]

And so in terms of my own personal life, I think the biggest change is that I'm inside what's called the bubble. I can't just do things on the spur of the moment. And that's actually the toughest thing about being President, because you want to just be able to interact with people normally, right? And these days either people are waving and really happy to see me, or they're booing me and saying—[*laughter*]—you know. But nobody just kind of interacts with you in a normal way.

The good thing about being President is, I've got this really nice home office called the Oval Office, and it means that I don't have a commute. Basically, I walk downstairs, I'm in my office, I'm working, and then I can leave to get home in time to have dinner with my family. So I'm spending a lot more time with my kids now and my wife now and having dinner with them every night. That's a lot better than it was before, when I was traveling a lot and commuting back and forth between DC and Chicago. So that's really good.

Now, obviously, the other way my life has changed is just I have so much more responsibility. But that part of the job I really enjoy. I mean, I really like meeting smart people who are passionate about their work; trying to figure out how do we get the schools better, how do we provide health care for people who don't have it—the policy work of thinking through how can we make changes in the country that will give people more opportunity, better jobs, better education. That stuff is what I spend most of my day doing, and that's really interesting. I really enjoy it.

All right, who else? Right here.

The President's Father/Single-Parent Upbringing

Q. Hi, my name's Brandon. I was wondering, you said that your father wasn't really in your life. That's kind of like me; my parents were divorced.

The President. Right.

Q. But how do you think your life would have been different if he would have been there for you? Like, if—how would your education have been and would you still be President?

The President. Yes, that's an interesting question. You know, you never know exactly how your life would turn out if there was a change in circumstances as big as your dad being around or—I think that—I actually wrote a book about this, called "Dreams from My Father," where I tried to figure out what was he like, who was he. He was a very, very smart man; he was sort of

arrogant and kind of overbearing, and he had his own problems and his own issues. So my mother always used to say that if he had been around, I probably would have been having a lot of arguments with him all the time.

I think that I was lucky, though, that my mother always—she never spoke badly about him, which I think—since I was a boy, knowing that even if your dad wasn't around, that you still were hearing good things about him I think probably improved my own self-confidence.

When I look back on my life, I think that—Michelle's dad was around, and Arne, I think, knew him—was just a great guy, wonderful, wonderful man. And he actually had multiple sclerosis, so he had to walk with canes, but went to every basketball game that my brother-in-law played in, was there for every dance recital Michelle was in, was just a great family man. And when I look at her dad, I say to myself, "Boy, that would be nice to have somebody like that that you could count on who was always there for you."

On the other hand, I think that not having a dad in some ways forced me to grow up faster. It meant that I made more mistakes because I didn't have somebody to tell me, here's how you do this or here's how you do that. But on the other hand, I had to, I think, raise myself a little bit more. I had to be more supportive of my mother because I knew how hard she was working. And so in some ways, maybe it made me stronger over time, just like it may be making you stronger over time.

Yes, let's get a young lady in here. Go ahead. Oh, go ahead.

The President's Influences

Q. Hi. I'm Lilly. And if you could have dinner with anyone, dead or alive, who would it be? [*Laughter*]

The President. Dinner with anyone dead or alive? Well, you know, dead or alive, that's a pretty big list. [*Laughter*] You know, I think that it might be Gandhi, who is a real hero of mine. Now, it would probably be a really small meal because—[*laughter*]—he didn't eat a lot. But he's somebody who I find a lot of inspiration in. He inspired Dr. King, so if it hadn't been for the nonviolent movement in India, you might not have seen the same nonviolent movement for civil rights here in the United States. He inspired Cesar Chavez, and he—and what was interesting was that he ended up doing so much and changing the world just by the power of his ethics, by his ability to change how people saw each other and saw themselves, and help people who thought they had no power realize that they had power, and then help people who had a lot of power realize that if all they're doing is oppressing people, then that's not a really good exercise of power.

So I'm always interested in people who are able to bring about change, not through violence, not through money, but through the force of their personality and their ethical and moral stances. And I—that's somebody that I'd love to sit down and talk to.

Yes. Go ahead.

The President's Goals Prior to Presidency

Q. Hi, my name's Alexa. And I was just wondering, what were your main goals before you won—before you graduated college, what you wanted to achieve in life?

The President. You know, as I said, when I was your age, I've got to say that I was a little bit of a goof-off, so my main goal was to get on the varsity basketball team, to have fun. And when I was younger, my aspirations were to be an architect, maybe to be a judge. And then I went through this phase where I was kind of rebelling; this was part of not having a dad around. I think I sort of was trying to work through my issues. But by the time I got to college, A, I realized I was never going to be a pro basketball player. Arne never realized that. [*Laughter*] He still doesn't. [*Laughter*]

Secretary Duncan. Still trying.

The President. We played this weekend. But so I realized I wasn't going to be a world-class athlete. I realized that I was good with writing. I was good in sort of analyzing how the world worked, whether it was politics or economics or—that those were my strengths. I was pretty good at math, but wasn't great at it. And the problem was the 4 years in high school that I let my math skills kind of go, it's hard to catch

up with math once you've—which is why, by the way, we need more scientists, we need more engineers, and if you're good at math, stay with it and really focus on it. That's something that I regret, is having let some of that go, because I was good at it when I was young.

So I think I figured out at that point that I wanted to be in some sort of job where I was helping people, that—I was never that interested in just being rich. That wasn't my—that wasn't really my goal. My goal was more to do something that I thought was meaningful. And so in college, I became interested in public policy and urban policy. And I started doing some stuff off campus around different issues, which is something—and doing community service type of work.

And I don't know what the opportunities here are at Wakefield, but one of the things that is a really great learning opportunity is to—if there's a community service program here, or if you want to do it through your church or your synagogue or your mosque or some other community group, you can really learn a lot about the world not just in the classroom, but also outside of the classroom.

Now, you've got to focus on doing what—your top priority has to be your classroom work. But I found in college that some of the work I did in the community actually opened my eyes and gave me a sense of how I might be able to help people. And that was really important. Okay?

The President's Visit to Wakefield High School

Q. Why did you decide to come to Wakefield instead of, like, Yorktown or Washington?

The President. You know, Wakefield has a wonderful reputation; this is a good school. I think when I look around the room, I really like the fact that it's a diverse school, that there are just people from all different walks of life here. I think that's part of the strength of America. And this is basically what America increasingly looks like, people from all different walks of life, different backgrounds, different religions, different ethnic backgrounds. And so we thought that this would be a good representative sample of students. And your questions have proven me right.

The President's Motivation

Q. Hi, I'm Sam. And I was just wondering how you motivate yourself to do all the work that goes along with your job.

The President. That's a great question. You know, some of it—I'm just going to be honest with you—some of it is just you don't want to fail, right? A lot of people are counting on me. And so even when I'm really tired, or things aren't going exactly the way I thought they would be going, or there's just a lot of problems that are landing on my desk, I think about all the struggles that a lot of people are going through around the country, and I say to myself, it's such an honor to be in this job; I can't afford to get tired; I just want to make sure that I'm doing the best that I can do for those folks.

And one of the things that we started doing as soon as I came in—we get thousands of letters—I mean, I think it's 40,000 letters a day, letters or e-mails a day from people all across the country, on all different subjects. And one of the things we started doing was trying to get 10 letters every day, sort of a sample of letters that I read personally. So at the end of my day, along with my big briefing book of things I have to read to prepare for the next day, education policy or health care or what's happening in Afghanistan, I have these 10 letters from ordinary folks.

And you read these letters, and some of them are really inspiring. People talk about how they're the first in their family to go to college, and they're having to work full time, but they're sure that they are going to get a better job and a better career, and so they're sticking with it even though it's hard.

Some of the stories are really depressing. You hear about people who are sick but don't have health care, and suddenly they get a bill for $100,000, and there's no way they can pay for it, and they're about to lose their house.

And you're just reminded that the country is full of really good people who sometimes are going through a hard time. They just need a break; they need a little bit of help. Maybe the way things are set up right now isn't always fair for people, and that motivates you, because you say, "Well, I can't make everything perfect. I

can't prevent somebody from getting sick, but maybe I can make sure that they've got insurance so that when they do get sick, they're going to get some help." I can't make everybody in an inner-city school suddenly not have problems with drugs on the street corner, or maybe parents who aren't really parenting well, but I can at least make sure that if they do show up at school, that they've got a teacher who's well trained. So that really, really motivates you a lot. That's what gets you up in the morning.

Secretary Duncan. Last one. You got the last question.

The President. Who's got the mike? Well, he already had the mike, so we'll give two last questions. These two right here. Go ahead, and then we'll end up with you.

The President's Advice

Q. Hi, Mr. President, my name's Jessie. When I grow up, I would like to have your job.

The President. Okay.

Q. Is there any advice you can give me, or career paths that I—things I need to know?

The President. Well, let me give you some very practical tips. [*Laughter*] First of all, I want everybody here to be careful about what you post on Facebook—[*laughter*]—because in the YouTube age, whatever you do, it will be pulled up again later somewhere in your life. And when you're young, you make mistakes, and you do some stupid stuff. And I've been hearing a lot about young people who, you know, they're posting stuff on Facebook, and then suddenly they go apply for a job, and somebody has done a search and—so that's some practical political advice for you right there. [*Laughter*] That's number one.

Number two, look, obviously, doing well in school is hugely important, especially if you don't come from some political family where they've got you all hooked up. If you're going to succeed, it's because people are going to think that—they have confidence that you can do the job. So really excelling in education is important.

Number three, find something that you're passionate about and do that well. There are a lot of people who decide to go into politics just because they want to be important or they like the idea of having their name up in lights or what have you. The truth is, is that I think the people who are the best elected officials are the people who, they found something they're good at; they get really—whether it's they're a really good lawyer, they're a really good teacher, they're a good businessperson—they've built a career and learned something about how to organize people and how to motivate people. And then they go into politics because they think that they can take those skills to do some more good, as opposed to just wanting to get elected just for the sake of getting elected.

And we have a lot of—I'll be honest with you, I mean, there are a lot of politicians like that, who, all they're thinking about is just, "How do I get reelected?" And so they never actually get anything done.

But that's not just true in politics; that's true in life. I think even if you didn't want to be President, if you wanted to be a successful—successful in business, most of the most successful businesspeople I know are people who—they were passionate about some idea, about a product or a service, and they really got into that. And then the money was a byproduct; the money came because you really did something good, as opposed to you just thinking about how do I make money.

You talk to somebody like a Bill Gates. That guy was just fascinated with computers, and that's everything he was thinking about. Now, he got so good at it that he then ended up being a very good businessman as well. But his focus was on, "How do I create something that actually helps people or is useful to them?" And I think you should have that same attitude, whatever it is that you decide to do. All right?

Okay, last question.

Health Care Reform

Q. Hi, my name is Sean. And my question is, currently, 36 countries have universal health coverage, including Iraq and Afghanistan, which have it paid for by the United States. Why can't the United States have universal health coverage?

The President. Well, I think that's the question I've been asking Congress, because I think we need it. I think we can do it. And I'm going to be making a speech tomorrow night talking about my plan to make sure that everybody has access to affordable health care.

Part of what happened is that back in the 1940s and fifties, a lot of—most of the wealthy countries around the world decided to set up health care systems that covered everybody. The United States, for a number of different reasons, organized their health care around employer-based health insurance. So what happened was, is that you basically got your health insurance through your job. And you can see some problems with that. Number one is, if you lose your job, then you don't have health insurance. The other thing is, some employers may not want to do right by their employees by giving them health insurance, and then they're kind of out of luck.

And so what happened was, is that the majority of Americans still have health insurance through their job, and it's—most of them are happy with it, but a lot of people fall through the cracks. If you're self-employed, if you start your own business, if you are working in a job that doesn't offer health insurance, then you're—you have real problems.

So what we're trying to do is set up a system where people who have health insurance on the jobs, they can keep it, but if you don't have health insurance for the job, if you're self-employed, if you're unemployed, that you're able to get health insurance through another way. And we can afford to do it, and it will actually, I think, over time save us money if we set that up. So all right?

Well, listen, guys, these have been terrific questions. I can tell you guys are going to excel in high school. You guys are going to do great. And your teachers are lucky to have you. And just remember that—my only other piece of advice is, stay focused, do well, apply yourself in school, but also understand you're going to make some mistakes during your teenage years, and you can recover from them. Just make sure that if you do make a mistake that you learn from it, and you'll be fine.

All right. Thank you guys for taking the time.

Secretary Duncan. Thanks, guys. Have a great school year.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:01 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to William H. Gates III, chairman, Microsoft Corporation. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson; and his brother-in-law Craig M. Robinson.

Remarks to Students and Faculty at Wakefield High School in Arlington
September 8, 2009

Hello, everybody. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, everybody. All right, everybody go ahead and have a seat. How is everybody doing today? How about Tim Spicer? I am here with students at Wakefield High School in Arlington, Virginia. And we've got students tuning in from all across America, from kindergarten through 12th grade. And I am just so glad that all could join us today. And I want to thank Wakefield for being such an outstanding host. Give yourselves a big round of applause.

Now, I know that for many of you, today is the first day of school. And for those of you in kindergarten or starting middle or high school, it's your first day in a new school, so it's understandable if you're a little nervous. I imagine there are some seniors out there who are feeling pretty good right now—[*applause*]—with just 1 more year to go. And no matter what grade you're in, some of you are probably wishing it were still summer and you could've stayed in bed just a little bit longer this morning.

I know that feeling. When I was young, my family lived overseas. I lived in Indonesia for a few years. And my mother, she didn't have the money to send me where all the American kids went to school, but she thought it was important for me to keep up with an American education. So she decided to teach me extra lessons herself, Monday through Friday. But because she had to go to work, the only time she could do it was at 4:30 in the morning. Now, as you might imagine, I wasn't too happy about getting up that early. And a lot of times, I'd fall asleep right

there at the kitchen table. But whenever I'd complain, my mother would just give me one of those looks, and she'd say, "This is no picnic for me either, buster." [*Laughter*]

So I know that some of you are still adjusting to being back at school. But I'm here today because I have something important to discuss with you. I'm here because I want to talk with you about your education and what's expected of all of you in this new school year.

Now, I've given a lot of speeches about education. And I've talked about responsibility a lot. I've talked about teachers' responsibility for inspiring students and pushing you to learn. I've talked about your parents' responsibility for making sure you stay on track and you get your homework done and don't spend every waking hour in front of the TV or with the Xbox. I've talked a lot about your Government's responsibility for setting high standards and supporting teachers and principals and turning around schools that aren't working, where students aren't getting the opportunities that they deserve.

But at the end of the day, we can have the most dedicated teachers, the most supportive parents, the best schools in the world, and none of it will make a difference, none of it will matter, unless all of you fulfill your responsibilities, unless you show up to those schools, unless you pay attention to those teachers, unless you listen to your parents and grandparents and other adults and put in the hard work it takes to succeed. And that's what I want to focus on today: the responsibility each of you has for your education.

I want to start with the responsibility you have to yourself. Every single one of you has something that you're good at. Every single one of you has something to offer. And you have a responsibility to yourself to discover what that is. That's the opportunity an education can provide.

Maybe you could be a great writer, maybe even good enough to write a book or articles in a newspaper, but you might not know it until you write that English paper—that English class paper that's assigned to you. Maybe you could be an innovator or an inventor, maybe even good enough to come up with the next iPhone or the new medicine or vaccine, but you might not know it until you do your project for your science class. Maybe you could be a mayor or a Senator or a Supreme Court Justice, but you might not know that until you join student government or the debate team.

And no matter what you want to do with your life, I guarantee that you'll need an education to do it. You want to be a doctor or a teacher or a police officer? You want to be a nurse or an architect, a lawyer or a member of our military? You're going to need a good education for every single one of those careers. You cannot drop out of school and just drop into a good job. You've got to train for it and work for it and learn for it.

And this isn't just important for your own life and your own future. What you make of your education will decide nothing less than the future of this country. The future of America depends on you. What you're learning in school today will determine whether we as a nation can meet our greatest challenges in the future.

You'll need the knowledge and problem-solving skills you learn in science and math to cure diseases like cancer and AIDS and to develop new energy technologies and protect our environment. You'll need the insights and critical-thinking skills you gain in history and social studies to fight poverty and homelessness, crime and discrimination, and make our Nation more fair and more free. You'll need the creativity and ingenuity you develop in all your classes to build new companies that will create new jobs and boost our economy.

We need every single one of you to develop your talents and your skills and your intellect so you can help us old folks solve our most difficult problems. If you don't do that, if you quit on school, you're not just quitting on yourself, you're quitting on your country.

Now, I know it's not always easy to do well in school. I know a lot of you have challenges in your lives right now that can make it hard to focus on your schoolwork. I get it. I know what it's like. My father left my family when I was 2 years old, and I was raised by a single mom who had to work and who struggled at times to pay the bills and wasn't always able to give us

the things that other kids had. There were times when I missed having a father in my life. There were times when I was lonely and I felt like I didn't fit in.

So I wasn't always as focused as I should have been on school, and I did some things that I'm not proud of, and I got in more trouble than I should have. And my life could have easily taken a turn for the worse.

But I was lucky. I got a lot of second chances, and I had the opportunity to go to college and law school and follow my dreams. And my wife, our First Lady, Michelle Obama, she has a similar story. Neither of her parents had gone to college, and they didn't have a lot of money. But they worked hard, and she worked hard, so that she could go to the best schools in this country.

But some of you might not have those advantages. Maybe you don't have adults in your life who give you the support that you need. Maybe someone in your family has lost their job and there's not enough money to go around. Maybe you live in a neighborhood where you don't feel safe, or have friends who are pressuring you to do things you know aren't right.

But at the end of the day, the circumstances of your life—what you look like, where you come from, how much money you have, what you've got going on at home—none of that is an excuse for neglecting your homework or having a bad attitude in school. That's no excuse for talking back to your teacher, or cutting class, or dropping out of school. There is no excuse for not trying. Where you are right now doesn't have to determine where you'll end up. No one's written your destiny for you, because here in America, you write your own destiny. You make your own future. That's what young people like you are doing every day, all across America.

Young people like Jazmin Perez from Roma, Texas. Jazmin didn't speak English when she first started school. Neither of her parents had gone to college. But she worked hard, earned good grades, and got a scholarship to Brown University—is now in graduate school studying public health, on her way to becoming Dr. Jazmin Perez.

I'm thinking about Andoni Schultz from Los Altos, California, who's fought brain cancer since he was 3. He's had to endure all sorts of treatments and surgeries, one of which affected his memory, so it took him much longer—hundreds of extra hours—to do his schoolwork. But he never fell behind. He's headed to college this fall.

And then there's Shantell Steve from my hometown of Chicago, Illinois. Even when bouncing from foster home to foster home in the toughest neighborhoods in the city, she managed to get a job at a local health care center, start a program to keep young people out of gangs, and she's on track to graduate high school with honors and go on to college.

And Jazmin, Andoni, and Shantell aren't any different from any of you. They face challenges in their lives just like you do. In some cases, they've got it a lot worse off than many of you. But they refused to give up. They chose to take responsibility for their lives, for their education, and set goals for themselves. And I expect all of you to do the same.

And that's why today I'm calling on each of you to set your own goals for your education and do everything you can to meet them. Your goal can be something as simple as doing all your homework, paying attention in class, or spending some time each day reading a book. Maybe you'll decide to get involved in an extracurricular activity or volunteer in your community. Maybe you'll decide to stand up for kids who are being teased or bullied because of who they are or how they look, because you believe, like I do, that all young people deserve a safe environment to study and learn. Maybe you'll decide to take better care of yourself so you can be more ready to learn. And along those lines, by the way, I hope all of you are washing your hands a lot and that you stay home from school when you don't feel well so we can keep people from getting the flu this fall and winter. But whatever you resolve to do, I want you to commit to it. I want you to really work at it.

I know that sometimes you get that sense from TV that you can be rich and successful without any hard work, that your ticket to success is through rapping or basketball or being a

reality TV star. Chances are you're not going to be any of those things.

The truth is, being successful is hard. You won't love every subject that you study. You won't click with every teacher that you have. Not every homework assignment will seem completely relevant to your life right at this minute. And you won't necessarily succeed at everything the first time you try.

That's okay. Some of the most successful people in the world are the ones who've had the most failures. J.K. Rowling, who wrote Harry Potter, her first Harry Potter book was rejected 12 times before it was finally published. Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team. He lost hundreds of games and missed thousands of shots during his career. But he once said, "I have failed over and over and over again in my life, and that's why I succeed."

These people succeeded because they understood that you can't let your failures define you, you have to let your failures teach you. You have to let them show you what to do differently the next time. So if you get into trouble, that doesn't mean you're a troublemaker, it means you need to try harder to act right. If you get a bad grade, that doesn't mean you're stupid, it just means you need to spend more time studying.

No one's born being good at all things. You become good at things through hard work. You're not a varsity athlete the first time you play a new sport. You don't hit every note the first time you sing a song. You've got to practice. The same principle applies to your schoolwork. You might have to do a math problem a few times before you get it right. You might have to read something a few times before you understand it. You definitely have to do a few drafts of a paper before it's good enough to hand in.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it. I do that every day. Asking for help isn't a sign of weakness, it's a sign of strength, because it shows you have the courage to admit when you don't know something, and that then allows you to learn something new. So find an adult that you trust—a parent, a grandparent, or a teacher, a coach, or a counselor—and ask them to help you stay on track to meet your goals.

And even when you're struggling, even when you're discouraged and you feel like other people have given up on you, don't ever give up on yourself, because when you give up on yourself, you give up on your country.

The story of America isn't about people who quit when things got tough. It's about people who kept going, who tried harder, who loved their country too much to do anything less than their best. It's the story of students who sat where you sit 250 years ago and went on to wage a Revolution, and they founded this Nation; young people, students who sat where you sit 75 years ago who overcame a depression and won a world war, who fought for civil rights and put a man on the Moon; students who sat where you sit 20 years ago who founded Google and Twitter and Facebook and changed the way we communicate with each other.

So today I want to ask all of you, what's your contribution going to be? What problems are you going to solve? What discoveries will you make? What will a President who comes here in 20 or 50 or 100 years say about what all of you did for this country?

Now, your families, your teachers, and I are doing everything we can to make sure you have the education you need to answer these questions. I'm working hard to fix up your classrooms and get you the books and the equipment and the computers you need to learn. But you've got to do your part too. So I expect all of you to get serious this year. I expect you to put your best effort into everything you do. I expect great things from each of you. So don't let us down. Don't let your family down or your country down. Most of all, don't let yourself down. Make us all proud.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:06 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Tim Spicer, senior class president, Wakefield High School, who introduced the President. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson. The

President's remarks were streamed live via the whitehouse.gov web site, broadcast live via C–SPAN, and made available through live satellite feed.

Statement on the G–20 Summit in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
September 8, 2009

Michelle and I look forward to welcoming world leaders to the wonderful city of Pittsburgh on September 24th and 25th, and we thank the people of Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania for opening their city as a showcase to the world.

The Pittsburgh summit is an important opportunity to continue the hard work that we have done in confronting the global economic crisis and renewing prosperity for our people. Together, we will review the progress we have made, assess what more needs to be done, and discuss what we can do together to lay the groundwork for balanced and sustainable economic growth.

Pittsburgh stands as a bold example of how to create new jobs and industries while transitioning to a 21st-century economy. As a city that has transformed itself from the city of steel to a center for high-tech innovation, including green technology, education and training, and research and development, Pittsburgh will provide both a beautiful backdrop and a powerful example for our work.

It's important to note how far we have come in preventing a global economic catastrophe. A year ago, our economy was in a freefall. Some economists were predicting a second great depression. Immediate action was required to rescue the economy. In the United States, we passed an historic Recovery Act that quickly put money in the hands of working families and is putting Americans to work all across the country, including in Pittsburgh and the surrounding area. That includes companies like East Penn Manufacturing, a third-generation family business which is now building batteries for the hybrid, energy-efficient vehicles of the 21st century. That includes Serious Materials manufacturing plant outside of Pittsburgh that was shuttered last year, which is now rehiring the workers who lost their jobs and giving them a new mission producing some of the most energy-efficient windows in the world. And at medical laboratories in Pittsburgh, scientists are making advances in tissue regeneration which will help people across the globe, including our troops wounded in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The steps that we have taken to jump-start growth have also been coordinated with our partners around the world. Industrial production throughout the G–20 has either stabilized or is growing. Global trade is expanding. Stresses in financial markets have significantly abated, and our financial institutions are raising needed capital.

But all of us must remember that our work is far from complete, not when our people are still looking for work. As the leaders of the world's largest economies, we have a responsibility to work together on behalf of sustained growth, while putting in place the rules of the road that can prevent this kind of crisis from happening again. To avoid being trapped in the cycle of bubble and bust, we must set a path for sustainable growth while steering clear of the imbalances of the past. That will be a key part of the G–20 agenda going forward, and the Pittsburgh summit can be an important milestone in our efforts.

In a place known as the city of bridges, we can come together to advance our common interest in a global recovery while turning the page to a truly 21st-century economy. By working with our friends and partners from around the world, the U.S. is ready to help lead this effort in Pittsburgh and beyond.

Remarks at a Memorial Service for Walter L. Cronkite in New York City
September 9, 2009

Thank you very much. Thank you.

To Chip, Kathy, and Nancy, who graciously shared your father with a nation that loved him; to Walter's friends, colleagues, proteges, and all who considered him a hero; to the men of the *Intrepid*; to all of you who are gathered here today: I am honored to be here to pay tribute to the life and times of the man who chronicled our time.

I did not know Mr. Cronkite personally, and my regret is made more acute by the stories that have been shared here today. Nor, for that matter, did I know him any better than the tens of millions who turned to him each night in search of the answer to a simple question: What happened today? But like them and like all of you, I have benefited as a citizen from his dogged pursuit of the truth, his passionate defense of objective reporting, and his view that journalism is more than just a profession; it is a public good vital to our democracy.

Even in his early career, Walter Cronkite resisted the temptation to get the story first in favor of getting it right. He wanted to get it first, but he understood the importance of getting it right. During one of his first jobs in Kansas City, Walter's program manager urged him to go on the air reporting a massive blaze—and we just heard how much he loved fires—[*laughter*]—a massive blaze at city hall that had already claimed lives. When Walter reached for the telephone, his boss asked, "What are you doing? Get on the air!" Walter replied that he was calling the fire department to confirm the story. "You don't need to confirm it," the manager shouted, "my wife's watching the whole thing!" [*Laughter*]

Needless to say, Walter made the call, and even as the program manager took the air himself to broadcast the unfolding tragedy, Walter discovered that it had been nothing more than a small fire that hadn't resulted in any injuries. He lost his job, but he got the story right.

Walter wasn't afraid to rattle the high and the mighty, but he never dared to compromise his integrity. He got along with elected officials, even if they were wary of one another's motives. One politician once remarked, "Walter, my friend, you've got to believe me; fully 85 percent of everything I told you today is the absolute truth." [*Laughter*]

He shared a complicated relationship with Presidents of both parties, who wanted him on their side even as they were convinced that he wasn't. President Johnson called Walter after the evening news from time to time to voice his displeasure over a certain story. But Walter knew that if he was receiving vociferous complaints from both sides, he must be doing his job.

His endless inquisitiveness about our world, I can imagine, came from a mother who sold encyclopedias for a living. As a boy, Walter spent countless hours getting lost within their pages, endlessly sidetracked by new and interesting entries that branched off from one another, fascinated by the world around us and how it worked.

And that's the way he lived his life, with curiosity, exploring our planet, seeking to make sense of it, and explaining it to others. He went everywhere, and he did everything. He raced cars and boats; he traveled everywhere from the Amazon to the Arctic; he plunged 8,000 feet below the sea, trekked 18,000 feet up into the Himalayas, and experienced weightlessness in the upper reaches of our atmosphere, all with one mission: to make it come alive for the rest of us.

And as our world began to change, he helped us understand those changes. He was forever there, reporting through World War and cold war, marches and milestones, scandal and success, calmly and authoritatively telling us what we needed to know. He was a voice of certainty in a world that was growing more and more uncertain. And through it all, he never lost the integrity or the plain-spoken speaking style that he gained growing up in the heartland. He was a familiar and welcome voice that spoke to each and every one of us personally.

So it may have seemed inevitable that he was named the most trusted man in America. But here's the thing: That title wasn't

bestowed on him by a network. We weren't told to believe it by some advertising campaign. It was earned. It was earned by year after year and decade after decade of painstaking effort, a commitment to fundamental values, his belief that the American people were hungry for the truth, unvarnished and unaccompanied by theater or spectacle. He didn't believe in dumbing down. He trusted us.

When he was told of this extraordinary honor that he was the most trusted man in America, he naturally downplayed it by saying the people had not polled his wife. [*Laughter*] When people of both political parties actually tried to recruit him to run for office, without even asking for his stances on the issues, he said no, to the relief of all potential opponents. And when, even a decade and a half after his retirement, he still ranked first in seven of eight categories for television journalists, he was disbelieving that he hadn't won the eighth category, attractiveness. [*Laughter*]

Through all the events that came to define the 20th century, through all our moments of deepest hurt and brightest hope, Walter Cronkite was there, telling the story of the American age. And this is how we remember him today. But we also remember and celebrate the journalism that Walter practiced, a standard of honesty and integrity and responsibility to which so many of you have committed your careers. It's a standard that's a little bit harder to find today. We know that this is a difficult time for journalism. Even as appetites for news and information grow, newsrooms are closing. Despite the big stories of our era, serious journalists find themselves all too often without a beat. Just as the news cycle has shrunk, so has the bottom line.

And too often, we fill that void with instant commentary and celebrity gossip and the softer stories that Walter disdained, rather than the hard news and investigative journalism he championed. "What happened today?" is replaced with "Who won today?" The public debate cheapens. The public trust falters. We fail to understand our world or one another as well as we should, and that has real consequences in our own lives and in the life of our Nation. We seem stuck with a choice between what cuts to our bottom line and what harms us as a society. Which price is higher to pay? Which cost is harder to bear?

"This democracy," Walter said, "cannot function without a reasonably well informed electorate." That's why the honest, objective, meticulous reporting that so many of you pursue with the same zeal that Walter did is so vital to our democracy and our society. Our future depends on it.

Now, Walter was no naive idealist. He understood the challenges and the pressures and the temptations facing journalism in this new era. He believed that a media company has an obligation to pursue a profit, but also an obligation to invest a good chunk of that profit back into news and public affairs. He was excited about all the stories that a high-tech world of journalism would be able to tell and all the newly emerging means with which to tell it.

Naturally, we find ourselves wondering how he would have covered the monumental stories of our time. In an era where the news that city hall is on fire can sweep around the world at the speed of the Internet, would he still have called to doublecheck? Would he have been able to cut through the murky noise of the blogs and the tweets and the sound bites to shine the bright light on substance? Could he still offer the perspective that we value? Would he have been able to remain a singular figure in an age of dwindling attention spans and omnipresent media?

And somehow, we know that the answer is yes. The simple values Walter Cronkite set out in pursuit of—to seek the truth, to keep us honest, to explore our world the best he could—they are as vital today as they ever were.

Our American story continues. It needs to be told. And if we choose to live up to Walter's example, if we realize that the kind of journalism he embodied will not simply rekindle itself as part of a natural cycle, but will come alive only if we stand up and demand it and resolve to value it once again, then I'm convinced that the choice between profit and progress is a false one and that the golden days of journalism still lie ahead.

Walter Cronkite invited a nation to believe in him, and he never betrayed that trust. That's

why so many of you entered the profession in the first place, that's why the standards he set for journalists still stand, and that's why he loved and valued all of you. But we loved and valued Walter not only as the rarest of men, but as an indispensable pillar of our society.

He's reunited with his beloved Betsy now, watching the stories of this century unfold with boundless optimism, every so often punctuating the air with a gleeful "Oh, boy!" [*Laughter*] We are grateful to him for altering and illuminating our time and for the opportunity he gave to us to say that, yes, we too were there.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:37 p.m. in the Avery Fisher Hall at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. In his remarks, he referred to Walter L. "Chip" Cronkite III, son, and M. Kathleen Cronkite and Nancy E. Cronkite, daughters, of Walter L. Cronkite.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Protocol Amending the France-United States Taxation Convention
September 9, 2009

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith, for the advice and consent of the Senate to its ratification, the Protocol Amending the Convention between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the French Republic for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income and Capital, signed at Paris on August 21, 1994, as Amended by the Protocol signed on December 8, 2004, signed January 13, 2009, at Paris, together with a related Memorandum of Understanding, signed January 13, 2009 (the "proposed Protocol"). I also transmit for the information of the Senate the report of the Department of State, which includes an overview of the proposed Protocol.

The proposed Protocol provides for the elimination of withholding taxes on certain cross-border direct dividend payments and on cross-border royalty payments.

The proposed Protocol also provides for mandatory arbitration of cases that the competent authorities of the countries have been unable to resolve after a reasonable period of time. The proposed Protocol contains a comprehensive provision designed to prevent "treaty shopping," which is the inappropriate use of a tax treaty by third-country residents. It provides for the exchange of information between tax authorities of the two countries to facilitate the administration of each country's tax laws.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the proposed Protocol and give its advice and consent to ratification.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
September 9, 2009.

Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on Health Care Reform
September 9, 2009

The President. Madam Speaker, Vice President Biden, Members of Congress, and the American people: When I spoke here last winter, this Nation was facing the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. We were losing an average of 700,000 jobs per month, credit was frozen, and our financial system was on the verge of collapse.

Now, as any American who is still looking for work or a way to pay their bills will tell you, we are by no means out of the woods. A full and vibrant recovery is still many months

away. And I will not let up until those Americans who seek jobs can find them, until those businesses that seek capital and credit can thrive, until all responsible homeowners can stay in their homes. That is our ultimate goal. But thanks to the bold and decisive action we've taken since January, I can stand here with confidence and say that we have pulled this economy back from the brink.

I want to thank the Members of this body for your efforts and your support in these last several months, and especially those who've taken the difficult votes that have put us on a path to recovery. I also want to thank the American people for their patience and resolve during this trying time for our Nation. But we did not come here just to clean up crises. We came here to build a future. So tonight, I return to speak to all of you about an issue that is central to that future, and that is the issue of health care.

I am not the first President to take up this cause, but I am determined to be the last. It has now been nearly a century since Theodore Roosevelt first called for health care reform, and ever since, nearly every President and Congress, whether Democrat or Republican, has attempted to meet this challenge in some way. A bill for comprehensive health reform was first introduced by John Dingell, Sr., in 1943. Sixty-five years later, his son continues to introduce that same bill at the beginning of each session.

Our collective failure to meet this challenge, year after year, decade after decade, has led us to the breaking point. Everyone understands the extraordinary hardships that are placed on the uninsured who live every day just one accident or illness away from bankruptcy. These are not primarily people on welfare; these are middle class Americans. Some can't get insurance on the job. Others are self-employed and can't afford it, since buying insurance on your own costs you three times as much as the coverage you get from your employer. Many other Americans who are willing and able to pay are still denied insurance due to previous illnesses or conditions that insurance companies decide are too risky or too expensive to cover.

We are the only democracy—the only advanced democracy on Earth—the only wealthy nation that allows such hardship for millions of its people. There are now more than 30 million American citizens who cannot get coverage. In just a 2-year period, one in every three Americans goes without health care coverage at some point. And every day, 14,000 Americans lose their coverage. In other words, it can happen to anyone.

But the problem that plagues the health care system is not just a problem for the uninsured. Those who do have insurance have never had less security and stability than they do today. More and more Americans worry that if you move, lose your job, or change your job, you'll lose your health insurance too. More and more Americans pay their premiums only to discover that their insurance company has dropped their coverage when they get sick or won't pay the full cost of care. It happens every day.

One man from Illinois lost his coverage in the middle of chemotherapy because his insurer found that he hadn't reported gallstones that he didn't even know about. They delayed his treatment, and he died because of it. Another woman from Texas was about to get a double mastectomy when her insurance company canceled her policy because she forgot to declare a case of acne. By the time she had her insurance reinstated, her breast cancer had more than doubled in size. That is heartbreaking, it is wrong, and no one should be treated that way in the United States of America.

Then there's the problem of rising cost. We spend one and a half times more per person on health care than any other country, but we aren't any healthier for it. This is one of the reasons that insurance premiums have gone up three times faster than wages. It's why so many employers, especially small businesses, are forcing their employers—employees to pay more for insurance or are dropping their coverage entirely. It's why so many aspiring entrepreneurs cannot afford to open a business in the first place and why American businesses that compete internationally, like our automakers, are at a huge disadvantage. And it's why those of us with health insurance are also paying a hidden and growing tax for those without it, about $1,000 per year that pays for somebody else's emergency room and charitable care.

Finally, our health care system is placing an unsustainable burden on taxpayers. When health care costs grow at the rate they have, it puts greater pressure on programs like Medicare and Medicaid. If we do nothing to slow these skyrocketing costs, we will eventually be spending more on Medicare and Medicaid than every other Government program combined. Put simply, our health care problem is our deficit problem. Nothing else even comes close. Nothing else.

Now, these are the facts. Nobody disputes them. We know we must reform this system. The question is how. Now, there are those on the left who believe that the only way to fix the system is through a single-payer system like Canada's, where we would severely restrict the private insurance market and have the Government provide coverage for everybody. On the right, there are those who argue that we should end employer-based systems and leave individuals to buy health insurance on their own.

I've said—I have to say that there are arguments to be made for both these approaches. But either one would represent a radical shift that would disrupt the health care most people currently have. Since health care represents one-sixth of our economy, I believe it makes more sense to build on what works and fix what doesn't, rather than try to build an entirely new system from scratch. And that is precisely what those of you in Congress have tried to do over the several—past several months.

During that time, we've seen Washington at its best and at its worst. We've seen many in this Chamber work tirelessly for the better part of this year to offer thoughtful ideas about how to achieve reform. Of the five committees asked to develop bills, four have completed their work, and the Senate Finance Committee announced today that it will move forward next week. That has never happened before. Our overall efforts have been supported by an unprecedented coalition of doctors and nurses, hospitals, seniors' groups, and even drug companies, many of whom opposed reform in the past. And there is agreement in this Chamber on about 80 percent of what needs to be done, putting us closer to the goal of reform than we have ever been.

But what we've also seen in these last months is the same partisan spectacle that only hardens the disdain many Americans have towards their own Government. Instead of honest debate, we've seen scare tactics. Some have dug into unyielding ideological camps that offer no hope of compromise. Too many have used this as an opportunity to score short-term political points, even if it robs the country of our opportunity to solve a long-term challenge. And out of this blizzard of charges and countercharges, confusion has reigned.

Well, the time for bickering is over. The time for games has passed. Now is the season for action. Now is when we must bring the best ideas of both parties together and show the American people that we can still do what we were sent here to do. Now is the time to deliver on health care. Now is the time to deliver on health care.

The plan I'm announcing tonight would meet three basic goals: It will provide more security and stability to those who have health insurance; it will provide insurance for those who don't; and it will slow the growth of health care costs for our families, our businesses, and our Government. It's a plan that asks everyone to take responsibility for meeting this challenge, not just government, not just insurance companies, but everybody, including employers and individuals. And it's a plan that incorporates ideas from Senators and Congressmen, from Democrats and Republicans, and yes, from some of my opponents in both the primary and general election.

Here are the details that every American needs to know about this plan. First, if you are among the hundreds of millions of Americans who already have health insurance through your job or Medicare or Medicaid or the VA, nothing in this plan will require you or your employer to change the coverage or the doctor you have. Let me repeat this: Nothing in our plan requires you to change what you have.

What this plan will do is make the insurance you have work better for you. Under this plan, it will be against the law for insurance

companies to deny you coverage because of a preexisting condition. As soon as I sign this bill, it will be against the law for insurance companies to drop your coverage when you get sick or water it down when you need it the most. They will no longer be able to place some arbitrary cap on the amount of coverage you can receive in a given year or in a lifetime. We will place a limit on how much you can be charged for out-of-pocket expenses, because in the United States of America, no one should go broke because they get sick. And insurance companies will be required to cover, with no extra charge, routine checkups and preventive care, like mammograms and colonoscopies, because there's no reason we shouldn't be catching diseases like breast cancer and colon cancer before they get worse. That makes sense, it saves money, and it saves lives.

Now, that's what Americans who have health insurance can expect from this plan, more security and more stability. Now, if you're one of the tens of millions of Americans who don't currently have health insurance, the second part of this plan will finally offer you quality, affordable choices. If you lose your job or you change your job, you'll be able to get coverage. If you strike out on your own and start a small business, you'll be able to get coverage. We'll do this by creating a new insurance exchange, a marketplace where individuals and small businesses will be able to shop for health insurance at competitive prices. Insurance companies will have an incentive to participate in this exchange because it lets them compete for millions of new customers. As one big group, these customers will have greater leverage to bargain with the insurance companies for better prices and quality coverage. This is how large companies and Government employees get affordable insurance, it's how everyone in this Congress gets affordable insurance, and it's time to give every American the same opportunity that we give ourselves.

Now, for those individuals and small businesses who still can't afford the lower priced insurance available in the exchange, we'll provide tax credits, the size of which will be based on your need. And all insurance companies that want access to this new marketplace will have to abide by the consumer protections I already mentioned. This exchange will take effect in 4 years, which will give us time to do it right. In the meantime, for those Americans who can't get insurance today because they have preexisting medical conditions, we will immediately offer low-cost coverage that will protect you against financial ruin if you become seriously ill. This was a good idea when Senator John McCain proposed it in the campaign, it's a good idea now, and we should all embrace it.

Now, even if we provide these affordable options, there may be those, especially the young and the healthy, who still want to take the risk and go without coverage. There may still be companies that refuse to do right by their workers by giving them coverage. The problem is, such irresponsible behavior costs all the rest of us money. If there are affordable options and people still don't sign up for health insurance, it means we pay for these people's expensive emergency room visits. If some businesses don't provide workers health care, it forces the rest of us to pick up the tab when their workers get sick and gives those businesses an unfair advantage over their competitors. And unless everybody does their part, many of the insurance reforms we seek, especially requiring insurance companies to cover preexisting conditions, just can't be achieved.

And that's why under my plan, individuals will be required to carry basic health insurance, just as most States require you to carry auto insurance. Likewise, businesses will be required to either offer their workers health care or chip in to help cover the cost of their workers. There will be a hardship waiver for those individuals who still can't afford coverage, and 95 percent of all small businesses, because of their size and narrow profit margin, would be exempt from these requirements. But we can't have large businesses and individuals who can afford coverage game the system by avoiding responsibility to themselves or their employees. Improving our health care system only works if everybody does their part.

And while there remain some significant details to be ironed out, I believe a broad consensus exists for the aspects of the plan I just outlined: consumer protections for those with

insurance, an exchange that allows individuals and small businesses to purchase affordable coverage, and a requirement that people who can afford insurance get insurance.

And I have no doubt that these reforms would greatly benefit Americans from all walks of life as well as the economy as a whole. Still, given all the misinformation that's been spread over the past few months, I realize that many Americans have grown nervous about reform. So tonight I want to address some of the key controversies that are still out there.

Some of people's concerns have grown out of bogus claims spread by those whose only agenda is to kill reform at any cost. The best example is the claim made not just by radio and cable talk show hosts, but by prominent politicians, that we plan to set up panels of bureaucrats with the power to kill off senior citizens. Now, such a charge would be laughable if it weren't so cynical and irresponsible. It is a lie, plain and simple.

Now, there are also those who claim that our reform efforts would insure illegal immigrants. This too is false. The reforms I'm proposing would not apply to those who are here illegally.

Representative Addison G. "Joe" Wilson. You lie!

The President. It's not true. And one more misunderstanding I want to clear up, under our plan, no Federal dollars will be used to fund abortions, and Federal conscience laws will remain in place.

Now, my health care proposal has also been attacked by some who oppose reform as a Government takeover of the entire health care system. As proof, critics point to a provision in our plan that allows the uninsured and small businesses to choose a publicly sponsored insurance option, administered by the Government just like Medicaid or Medicare.

So let me set the record straight here. My guiding principle is, and always has been, that consumers do better when there is choice and competition. That's how the market works. Unfortunately, in 34 States, 75 percent of the insurance market is controlled by 5 or fewer companies. In Alabama, almost 90 percent is controlled by just one company. And without competition, the price of insurance goes up and quality goes down. And it makes it easier for insurance companies to treat their customers badly by cherry-picking the healthiest individuals and trying to drop the sickest, by overcharging small businesses who have no leverage, and by jacking up rates.

Insurance executives don't do this because they're bad people; they do it because it's profitable. As one former insurance executive testified before Congress, insurance companies are not only encouraged to find reasons to drop the seriously ill, they are rewarded for it. All of this is in service of meeting what this former executive called "Wall Street's relentless profit expectations."

Now, I have no interest in putting insurance companies out of business. They provide a legitimate service and employ a lot of our friends and neighbors. I just want to hold them accountable. And the insurance reforms that I've already mentioned would do just that. But an additional step we can take to keep insurance companies honest is by making a not-for-profit public option available in the insurance exchange. Now, let me be clear. Let me be clear. It would only be an option for those who don't have insurance. No one would be forced to choose it, and it would not impact those of you who already have insurance. In fact, based on Congressional Budget Office estimates, we believe that less than 5 percent of Americans would sign up.

Despite all this, the insurance companies and their allies don't like this idea. They argue that these private companies can't fairly compete with the Government. And they'd be right if taxpayers were subsidizing this public insurance option. But they won't be. I've insisted that like any private insurance company, the public insurance option would have to be self-sufficient and rely on the premiums it collects. But by avoiding some of the overhead that gets eaten up at private companies by profits and excessive administrative costs and executive salaries, it could provide a good deal for consumers and would also keep pressure on private insurers to keep their policies affordable and treat their customers better, the same way public colleges and universities

provide additional choice and competition to students without in any way inhibiting a vibrant system of private colleges and universities.

Now, it's worth noting that a strong majority of Americans still favor a public insurance option of the sort I've proposed tonight. But its impact shouldn't be exaggerated by the left or the right or the media. It is only one part of my plan and shouldn't be used as a handy excuse for the usual Washington ideological battles. To my progressive friends, I would remind you that for decades, the driving idea behind reform has been to end insurance company abuses and make coverage available for those without it. The public option is only a means to that end, and we should remain open to other ideas that accomplish our ultimate goal. And to my Republican friends, I say that rather than making wild claims about a Government takeover of health care, we should work together to address any legitimate concerns you may have.

Now, for example, some have suggested that the public option go into effect only in those markets where insurance companies are not providing affordable policies. Others have proposed a co-op or another nonprofit entity to administer the plan. These are all constructive ideas worth exploring. But I will not back down on the basic principle that if Americans can't find affordable coverage, we will provide you with a choice. And I will make sure that no Government bureaucrat or insurance company bureaucrat gets between you and the care that you need.

Finally, let me discuss an issue that is a great concern to me, to Members of this Chamber, and to the public, and that's how we pay for this plan. And here's what you need to know. First, I will not sign a plan that adds one dime to our deficits, either now or in the future. I will not sign it if it adds one dime to the deficit, now or in the future, period. And to prove that I'm serious, there will be a provision in this plan that requires us to come forward with more spending cuts if the savings we've promised don't materialize. Now, part of the reason I faced a trillion-dollar deficit when I walked in the door of the White House is because too many initiatives over the last decade were not paid for, from the Iraq war to tax breaks for the wealthy. I will not make that same mistake with health care.

Second, we've estimated that most of this plan can be paid for by finding savings within the existing health care system, a system that is currently full of waste and abuse. Right now too much of the hard-earned savings and tax dollars we spend on health care don't make us any healthier. That's not my judgment; it's the judgment of medical professionals across this country. And this is also true when it comes to Medicare and Medicaid.

In fact, I want to speak directly to seniors for a moment, because Medicare is another issue that's been subjected to demagoguery and distortion during the course of this debate. More than four decades ago, this Nation stood up for the principle that after a lifetime of hard work, our seniors should not be left to struggle with a pile of medical bills in their later years. That's how Medicare was born, and it remains a sacred trust that must be passed down from one generation to the next. And that is why not a dollar of the Medicare trust fund will be used to pay for this plan.

The only thing this plan would eliminate is the hundreds of billions of dollars in waste and fraud as well as unwarranted subsidies in Medicare that go to insurance companies, subsidies that do everything to pad their profits but don't improve the care of seniors. And we will also create an independent commission of doctors and medical experts charged with identifying more waste in the years ahead.

Now, these steps will ensure that you, America's seniors, get the benefits you've been promised. They will ensure that Medicare is there for future generations. And we can use some of the savings to fill the gap in coverage that forces too many seniors to pay thousands of dollars a year out of their own pockets for prescription drugs. That's what this plan will do for you. So don't pay attention to those scary stories about how your benefits will be cut, especially since some of the same folks who are spreading these tall tales have fought against Medicare in the past and just this year supported a budget that would essentially have turned Medicare into a privatized voucher program. That will not happen on my watch. I will protect Medicare.

Now, because Medicare is such a big part of the health care system, making the program more efficient can help usher in changes in the way we deliver health care that can reduce costs for everybody. We have long known that some places, like the Intermountain Healthcare in Utah or the Geisinger Health System in rural Pennsylvania, offer high-quality care at costs below average. So the commission can help encourage the adoption of these commonsense best practices by doctors and medical professionals throughout the system, everything from reducing hospital infection rates to encouraging better coordination between teams of doctors.

Reducing the waste and inefficiency in Medicare and Medicaid will pay for most of this plan. Now, much of the rest would be paid for with revenues from the very same drug and insurance companies that stand to benefit from tens of millions of new customers. And this reform will charge insurance companies a fee for their most expensive policies, which will encourage them to provide greater value for the money, an idea which has the support of Democratic and Republican experts. And according to these same experts, this modest change could help hold down the costs of health care for all of us in the long run.

Now, finally, many in this Chamber, particularly on the Republican side of the aisle, have long insisted that reforming our medical malpractice laws can help bring down the cost of health care. Now—[*applause*]—there you go. There you go. Now, I don't believe malpractice reform is a silver bullet, but I've talked to enough doctors to know that defensive medicine may be contributing to unnecessary costs. So I'm proposing that we move forward on a range of ideas about how to put patient safety first and let doctors focus on practicing medicine. I know that the Bush administration considered authorizing demonstration projects in individual States to test these ideas. I think it's a good idea, and I'm directing my Secretary of Health and Human Services to move forward on this initiative today.

Now, add it all up, and the plan I'm proposing will cost around $900 billion over 10 years, less than we have spent on the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and less than the tax cuts for the wealthiest few Americans that Congress passed at the beginning of the previous administration. Now, most of these costs will be paid for with money already being spent, but spent badly, in the existing health care system. The plan will not add to our deficit. The middle class will realize greater security, not higher taxes. And if we are able to slow the growth of health care costs by just one-tenth of 1 percent each year—one-tenth of 1 percent—it will actually reduce the deficit by $4 trillion over the long term.

Now, this is the plan I'm proposing. It's a plan that incorporates ideas from many of the people in this room tonight, Democrats and Republicans. And I will continue to seek common ground in the weeks ahead. If you come to me with a serious set of proposals, I will be there to listen. My door is always open.

But know this: I will not waste time with those who have made the calculation that it's better politics to kill this plan than to improve it. I won't stand by while the special interests use the same old tactics to keep things exactly the way they are. If you misrepresent what's in this plan, we will call you out. And I will not accept the status quo as a solution. Not this time. Not now.

Everyone in this room knows what will happen if we do nothing. Our deficit will grow, more families will go bankrupt, more businesses will close, more Americans will lose their coverage when they are sick and need it the most, and more will die as a result. We know these things to be true.

That is why we cannot fail, because there are too many Americans counting on us to succeed, the ones who suffer silently and the ones who share their stories with us at town halls, in e-mails, and in letters. I received one of those letters a few days ago. It was from our beloved friend and colleague Ted Kennedy. He had written it back in May, shortly after he was told that his illness was terminal. He asked that it be delivered upon his death.

In it he spoke about what a happy time his last months were, thanks to the love and support of family and friends, his wife Vicki, his amazing children, who are all here tonight.

And he expressed confidence that this would be the year that health care reform, "that great unfinished business of our society," he called it, would finally pass. He repeated the truth that health care is decisive for our future prosperity, but he also reminded me that "it concerns more than material things." "What we face," he wrote, "is above all a moral issue; at stake are not just the details of policy, but fundamental principles of social justice and the character of our country."

I've thought about that phrase quite a bit in recent days—the character of our country. One of the unique and wonderful things about America has always been our self-reliance, our rugged individualism, our fierce defense of freedom, and our healthy skepticism of government. And figuring out the appropriate size and role of government has always been a source of rigorous and, yes, sometimes angry, debate. That's our history.

For some of Ted Kennedy's critics, his brand of liberalism represented an affront to American liberty. In their minds, his passion for universal health care was nothing more than a passion for big Government. But those of us who knew Teddy and worked with him here, people of both parties, know that what drove him was something more. His friend Orrin Hatch, he knows that. They worked together to provide children with health insurance. His friend John McCain knows that. They worked together on a patient's bill of rights. His friend Chuck Grassley knows that. They worked together to provide health care to children with disabilities.

On issues like these, Ted Kennedy's passion was born not of some rigid ideology, but of his own experience. It was the experience of having two children stricken with cancer. He never forgot the sheer terror and helplessness that any parent feels when a child is badly sick. And he was able to imagine what it must be like for those without insurance, what it would be like to have to say to a wife or a child or an aging parent, there is something that could make you better, but I just can't afford it.

That large-heartedness, that concern and regard for the plight of others, is not a partisan feeling; it's not a Republican or a Democratic feeling. It too is part of the American character, our ability to stand in other people's shoes, a recognition that we are all in this together, and when fortune turns against one of us, others are there to lend a helping hand, a belief that in this country, hard work and responsibility should be rewarded by some measure of security and fair play, and an acknowledgment that sometimes government has to step in to help deliver on that promise.

This has always been the history of our progress. In 1935, when over half of our seniors could not support themselves and millions had seen their savings wiped away, there were those who argued that Social Security would lead to socialism, but the men and women of Congress stood fast, and we are all the better for it. In 1965, when some argued that Medicare represented a Government takeover of health care, Members of Congress, Democrats and Republicans, did not back down. They joined together so that all of us could enter our golden years with some basic peace of mind.

You see, our predecessors understood that government could not, and should not, solve every problem. They understood that there are instances when the gains in security from government action are not worth the added constraints on our freedom. But they also understood that the danger of too much government is matched by the perils of too little, that without the leavening hand of wise policy, markets can crash, monopolies can stifle competition, the vulnerable can be exploited. And they knew that when any government measure, no matter how carefully crafted or beneficial, is subject to scorn, when any efforts to help people in need are attacked as un-American, when facts and reason are thrown overboard and only timidity passes for wisdom, and we can no longer even engage in a civil conversation with each other over the things that truly matter, that at that point, we don't merely lose our capacity to solve big challenges, we lose something essential about ourselves.

That was true then; it remains true today. I understand how difficult this health care debate has been. I know that many in this country are deeply skeptical that government is looking out for them. I understand that the politically safe move would be to kick the can further down the

road, to defer reform one more year or one more election or one more term.

But that is not what the moment calls for. That's not what we came here to do. We did not come to fear the future. We came here to shape it. I still believe we can act even when it's hard. I still believe. I still believe that we can act when it's hard. I still believe we can replace acrimony with civility and gridlock with progress. I still believe we can do great things and that here and now we will meet history's test, because that's who we are. That is our calling. That is our character.

Thank you, God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:16 p.m. in the House Chamber of the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Wendell Potter, former chief corporate spokesman, CIGNA; Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius; and Victoria R. Kennedy, wife, Kara Kennedy Allen, daughter, Caroline R. Raclin, stepdaughter, Edward M. Kennedy, Jr., and Patrick J. Kennedy II, sons, and G. Curran Raclin, stepson, of the late Sen. Edward M. Kennedy.

Remarks on Health Care Reform
September 10, 2009

All righty. Hey, guys. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much. It is good to be with all of you. Please sit down, everybody. [*Laughter*] It is just great to be with nurses again. It is great to be with Becky. I want to acknowledge—I want to make sure I get them in order—Nate; this is Linda; and that is Sonia. Right? I got it right? And I want to thank all of them for appearing with us today. And I want to also acknowledge Dr. Mary Wakefield, our Health Resources and Services Administrator, our highest ranking nurse in the administration.

Thank you, Becky, for your leadership on behalf of nurses. And I want to just thank you for leading an extraordinary organization: the American Nurses Association. I was mentioning to Becky the first time we met that when I was in the State legislature, I was the chairman of the health and human services committee, and one of my strongest allies in Springfield, Illinois, in the State capital there, was the Nurses Association. And we did a lot of work together to make sure that nurses were getting treated properly, were getting paid properly, getting the overtime they needed, getting time off that they needed, getting the ratios that they needed.

And so I've got a wonderful history working side by side with all of you to make sure that we've got the best health care system in the world. And as a consequence, I want to say thank you for all the support you're providing for health insurance reform for the American people. I am so pleased to be joined by all of you. And I've said it before, and I will say it again: I just love nurses. I don't know what it is. I love nurses. Michelle knows about it. It's okay. [*Laughter*] I'll never forget how compassionate, how professional, and how dedicated nurses have been to Michelle and I when we needed them most.

And when our daughters were born, one of our best friends was—is an ob-gyn, and she presided over the delivery. But the truth of the matter is, we only saw her for 10 minutes. [*Laughter*] That was it. This was one of our best friends. [*Laughter*] The rest of the time we spent with nurses who not only eased the nerves of an anxious father but made sure Michelle was doing all right, cared for our newborn babies.

When our youngest daughter, Sasha, was diagnosed with meningitis when she was just 3 months old, it was one of the scariest moments of my life. And we had to have a spinal tap administered, and she ended up being in the hospital for 3 or 4 days. And it was touch and go; we didn't know whether she'd be permanently affected by it. It was the nurses who walked us through what was happening and made sure that Sasha was okay.

So that continues in joy of birth, but also, obviously, in tougher times. When my mother

passed away from cancer, when my grandmother passed away, each time nurses were there to provide extraordinary care, but also extraordinary support. And so I'm thankful for that.

And as a father and as a son and a grandson, I will forever be in debt to the women and men of your profession. And I know that millions of other families feel the same way. You're the bedrock of our medical profession. You're on the frontlines of health care in small clinics and in large hospitals, in rural towns and big cities all across this country.

So few people understand as well as you why today's health care system so badly needs reform. One—[*applause*]—now, one part of the problem is the uninsured. And this morning, the Census Bureau released new data showing not only that the poverty rate increased last year at the highest rate since the early 1990s, but also that the number of uninsured rose in 2008. And we know from more up-to-date surveys that since the recession intensified last September, the situation's grown worse. Over the last 12 months, it's estimated that the ranks of the uninsured have swelled by nearly 6 million people; that's 17,000 men and women every single day. And we know that during this period of time, the number of adults who get their coverage at the workplace has dropped by 8 million people.

But I don't have to tell you about all the problems plaguing the health care system and the fact that they don't just affect the uninsured. Most Americans do have insurance and have never had less security and stability than they do right now. Because they're subject to the whims of health insurance companies, many people fear that they'll lose their health insurance if they move or if they lose their job, they change jobs, or that insurance just won't cover them when they need it the most. Because insurance companies can deny coverage if a person has a preexisting condition, many people fear they won't be covered when they get sick. Because there's no cap on how much a person can pay in out-of-pocket expenses each year, many others fear that a single illness will lead them into financial ruin even if they have insurance.

And I—every day I get letters from people. I just got a letter 2 days ago from a woman who had been changing jobs, had just gone to sign up for her new Blue Cross Blue Shield policy, but in January, before she had taken her new job, she had felt a lump and had been referred to do a mammogram and found out, unfortunately, she had breast cancer. Well, the new insurance policy just said, this is a preexisting condition; won't cover it. She now owes $250,000.

This happens all the time all across the country. You see it every day. It is heartbreaking, it is wrong, and as I said last night, nobody should be treated that way in the United States of America, nobody.

So the reason I need nurses so badly is because now is the time to act, and I will not permit reform to be postponed or imperiled by the usual ideological diversions or—[*applause*]. We don't need more partisan distractions. If there are real concerns about any aspect of my plan, then let's address them. If there are real differences, let's resolve them. But we have talked this issue to death, year after year, decade after decade. And the time for talk is winding down; the time for bickering has passed. We're not the first generation to take up this cause, but we can and have to be the last.

So just in case folks weren't tuned in last night—[*laughter*]—if they were watching "So You Think You Can Dance"—[*laughter*]—a show Michelle likes, by the way—[*laughter*]—let me explain—just explain, more briefly than I did last night, what health insurance reform will mean for ordinary Americans. Simply put, it will mean that as folks go about their everyday lives, one thing they won't have to worry about as much is their health care. It will provide more security and stability to those who have health insurance. It will provide insurance to those who don't and slow the growth of health care costs for our families, our businesses, and our Government.

Now, for the hundreds of millions of Americans who have health insurance, nothing in this plan will require you or your employer to change the coverage or the doctor you have. Nothing will change for you if you have insurance. Nothing in the plan will require any changes. What this plan will do is make the

insurance you have work better for you, will put in place strong consumer protections that will make it illegal for insurance companies to deny a person coverage on the basis of a preexisting condition.

We will make sure that we place a limit on how much folks have to pay for out-of-pocket expenses. For the tens of millions of Americans who are uninsured, we'll create a new insurance exchange, a marketplace where uninsured Americans and small businesses can choose health insurance at competitive prices from a different—a number of different options.

And by pooling the uninsured and small businesses together as one big group, we give insurance companies an incentive to participate and give consumers leverage to bargain for better prices and quality coverage. And as I've said from the outset, and repeated last night, one way to give people a real choice when it comes to their health care and keep insurance companies honest is by making one of the options available in such a marketplace a non-for-profit public option.

But let me just repeat, because this is the source of the rumor that we're plotting some Government takeover of health care—[*laughter*]—it would just be one option among many. No one would be forced to choose it. And everybody believes that the vast majority of people will still be getting their insurance through private insurance.

Add it all up, and the plan I'm proposing will cost around $900 billion over 10 years, $90 billion a year. That's real money. But it's far less than we've spent on the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. And it's less than the tax cuts for the wealthiest few Americans that Congress passed at the beginning of the previous administration. The cost of this plan will not add to our deficit. The middle class will be rewarded with greater security, not higher taxes. And if we're able to slow the growth of health care costs by just a fraction of 1 percent each year, we will actually reduce the deficit by $4 trillion over the long term.

And by the way, when we stop spending money on things that don't improve quality, then we can start spending money on things that do improve quality, which means, for example, that we can start paying our nursing professors more money to train more nurses so that we can actually have the kind of quality care that we need. Just one example, a random example that I chose. [*Laughter*]

Now, amid all the chatter and the noise on radio and TV, with all the falsehoods that are promoted by not just talk show hosts, but sometimes prominent politicians, sometimes it can be easy to lose sight of what the debate over reform is all about. It's about stories like the one told by an oncology nurse named Theresa Brown. A few weeks ago, Theresa wrote a blog post about a patient of hers. He was in his sixties, a recent grandfather, a Steelers fan, spent the last 3 months of his life worrying about mounting medical bills. And she wrote: "My patient thought he had planned well for his health care needs. He just never thought he would wake up one day with a diagnosis of leukemia. But which of us does?" she asked. And then she wrote: "That's why we need health care reform."

Nurses, that's why we need health care reform. I am absolutely confident that if you continue to do your part—nurses, you guys have a lot of credibility; you touch a lot of people's lives; people trust you—if you're out there saying, it's time for us to act, we need to go ahead and make a change, if all of us do our parts, not just here in Washington but all across the country, then we will bid farewell to the days when our health care system was a source of worry to families and a drag on our economy, and America will finally join the ranks of every other advanced nation by providing quality, affordable health insurance to all of its citizens. That's our goal. We are going to meet it this year with your help.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:29 a.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Rebecca M. Patton, president, American Nurses Association; Nate Guyton, chief nursing officer, Mercy Suburban Hospital, Norristown, PA; Linda Gural, intensive care

staff nurse, Community Medical Center, Toms River, NJ; Sonia Reich, staff nurse, Geisinger Medical Center, Danville, PA; and Theresa Brown, oncology nurse, UPMC Shadyside, Pittsburgh, PA.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters
September 10, 2009

The President. Hello, everybody. We just had an excellent and informative Cabinet meeting. Secretaries Clinton and Gates provided an overview of our current national security posture. Secretary Geithner discussed some of the—both promise and peril of our current economic situation. But we spent a large portion of our time discussing the critical importance of health care reform.

This is an issue that touches on all of the agencies that are represented at this table. Hilda Solis at the Department of Labor understands that it is very difficult for workers to obtain raises of any significance if increased productivity is all going into increased health care costs. Gary Locke at the Department of Commerce is constantly hearing stories from businesses, small and large alike, about ever escalating premiums and the need to get control of our health care costs. Bob Gates, one of the biggest parts of his budget is—are his health care costs.

And so we all understand that this is an issue that the country is ready to deal with. As I said last night, I am confident the plan that we've put forward is the right plan for the American people. I continue to be open to suggestions and ideas from all quarters: House Members, Senate Members, Democrats, Republicans, outside groups. What we cannot do is stand pat. What we can't do is accept a status quo that is bankrupting families, businesses, and our Nation.

I will not tolerate us continuing to pay more for less in health care. The time is right, and we are going to move aggressively to get this done. And every member of this Cabinet is invested. And I want to particularly thank Secretary Sebelius and my health care team for the extraordinary work that they've done getting us this far. But this administration understands that this is important for all of our agencies, all of our constituencies, and we are going to make a full-court press in the coming month to make sure that we go ahead and get this done for the American people.

All right?

Representative Addison G. "Joe" Wilson of South Carolina/Health Care Debate

Q. Do you accept Wilson's apology, sir?

The President. Yes, I do. I'm a big believer that we all make mistakes. He apologized quickly and without equivocation, and I'm appreciative of that.

I do think that, as I said last night, we have to get to the point where we can have a conversation about big, important issues that matter to the American people without vitriol, without name-calling, without the assumption of the worst in other people's motives.

We are all Americans; we all want to do best for our country. We've got different ideas, but for the most part, we have the same aims, which is to make sure that people who work hard in this country and who act responsibly are able to get good jobs, good wages, raise their families, make sure those kids have a good education; that they are protected from misfortune or accident by having health care and retirement security in place; want to keep people safe, and that's why our national security team is so important.

Our goals are generally the same, whether we're Democrats or Republicans, and in fact, most Americans don't even think about those labels all that much. They are turned off when they see people using wild accusations, false claims, name-calling, sharply ideological approaches to solve the problems. They want pragmatism; they want people to stay focused on the job. And I hope that some of the fever breaks a little bit.

The media can always be helpful by not giving all the attention to the loudest or shrillest

voices and try to stay a little bit more focused on the issues at hand. All right?

Q. Will you talk with him if he decides to call you?

The President. Oh, I talk to everybody.

Q. Thank you.

The President. Absolutely.

All right? Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:24 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner; Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis; Secretary of Commerce Gary F. Locke; and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Certain Terrorist Attacks
September 10, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1622(d), provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. Consistent with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* the enclosed notice, stating that the emergency declared with respect to the terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, is to continue in effect for an additional year.

The terrorist threat that led to the declaration on September 14, 2001, of a national emergency continues. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue in effect after September 14, 2009, the national emergency with respect to the terrorist threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
September 10, 2009.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Honoring the 2009 Stanley Cup Champion Pittsburgh Penguins
September 10, 2009

The President. Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat.

First of all, I'm sorry to keep you guys waiting. I—the—I have all these things I've got to do—[*laughter*]—as President. This is by far the most fun thing that I'm doing today. So welcome to the White House. We are extraordinarily pleased to have the world champion Pittsburgh Penguins with their third Stanley Cup.

Just a couple of acknowledgements in the house: Pittsburgh mayor, Luke Ravenstahl—where's Luke? Where's the mayor? I thought he was around here. Well, he should be. [*Laughter*] Senator Bob Casey—is he around? Come on, Bob Casey; Senator Arlen Specter in the house; Representative Mike Doyle—I know he's a fan; Representative Jason Altmire; Representative Chris Carney; Representative Tim Murphy; and Representative Glenn Thompson. And even though he's from Iowa, this guy grew up in Pittsburgh, is still a fanatic, and that is Secretary Tom Vilsack, Agricultural Secretary.

I have to say all of you look pretty good without your playoff beards. They're pretty good looking guys without all that. [*Laughter*] I want to congratulate all the fans back home who made Mellon Arena such a tough place for visiting teams this year. With the Steelers and the Penguins, I guess it's a good time to be a sports fan in Pittsburgh.

I was complaining about this—it's been a while since Chicago won anything, coach. [*Laughter*] And I'm not happy about that. But as many of you know, I have a special place in my heart for Pittsburgh, and so if it can't be the Blackhawks, then the Penguins aren't a bad choice.

The last time this team was here was during the playoffs against the Washington Capitals. It was a hard fought series, but it showed everybody how enthusiastic our hockey fans are also here in the Nation's Capital.

I want to thank Coach Dan for being here. Not only did Dan win the Stanley Cup in his first season as head coach—that does not happen very often—but he also brought a new sense of purpose and excitement to the team and made sure his players had a little fun along the way.

Having Mario Lemieux here is a pretty big deal. He won a couple of these trophies as a player, but this is his first as an owner, and he's still got a big smile on his face, so I guess it feels pretty good this way too.

I want to thank Willie O'Ree for joining us. Willie is a hockey pioneer in his own right, who has worked tirelessly to make sure kids from every background can learn the lessons that hockey has to offer. So we are grateful to you, sir. Please give him a big round of applause.

And this team would not be here without two of its youngest members. So first of all, I want to congratulate Sidney Crosby on becoming the youngest captain in history to win the Stanley Cup and Evgeni Malkin for being the third-youngest player ever to be named playoff MVP.

You know, we've had a lot of championship teams visit the White House—I've seen a lot of trophies—there is something special about the Stanley Cup, other than it just being really big. [*Laughter*] Winning this trophy takes a whole new level of sacrifice. It takes a group of players who can persevere through injuries and pain and setbacks and seven game series. Above all, it takes a team that is willing to stick together, because nobody wins the Stanley Cup on their own.

And that's why, after the last buzzer sounded back in June, these players took the Cup on the road to say thank you to all the people who helped get them here. They took it on fishing trips and stopped by neighborhood barbeques; they visited elementary schools and brightened the days of children who were in hospitals. I think this Cup has even held a baby or two. So this is a team that understands that being a champion doesn't end when you step off the ice.

Service is a way of life for these players back in Pittsburgh. Earlier today, Willie and the guys put on a clinic for kids here at Fort Dupont as part of our United We Serve summer of service. And besides teaching the kids a few moves, they stressed the importance of staying in school and leading active and healthy lifestyles. I understand we've got some of those young players from Washington, DC, and Pittsburgh here with us; go ahead and wave, guys. There you go.

And that's what the Stanley Cup is all about, not just having your names engraved alongside the best players in history, but also giving back to others along the way. And this spirit of service helps to strengthen our communities, it strengthens our country, and I know this team gets a lot in return for it as well.

So I want again to just say congratulations for your outstanding season, for not just your athleticism, but also your sportsmanship. Coach, we're very proud of you. Thank you very much.

Dan Bylsma. Mr. President, it's certainly an honor and a privilege to receive the invitation to come here today, and the hospitality you showed our team and our families and the organization, it was very gracious, and we appreciate it very much. And on behalf of all the people in our organization, but especially the players behind me, we'd like to present you with a jersey—our captain, Sidney——

The President. This is what I'm talking about. [*Laughter*]

Can I just make one more point? Sidney must be really fast because there are some big hockey players, and he's not one of them. [*Laughter*] But you know, he's got some speed and some skill. So thank you everybody. We are thrilled—can we get a picture with the Cup in the background here?

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:45 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks,

he referred to Dan Bylsma, head coach, Pittsburgh Penguins; and William O'Ree, Director of Youth Development, National Hockey League.

Remarks at a Wreath-Laying Ceremony at the Pentagon Memorial in Arlington, Virginia
September 11, 2009

Secretary Gates, Admiral Mullen, and members of the Armed Forces, fellow Americans, family and friends of those that we lost this day: Michelle and I are deeply humbled to be with you. Eight Septembers have come and gone. Nearly 3,000 days have passed—almost one for each of those taken from us—but no turning of the seasons can diminish the pain and the loss of that day. No passage of time and no dark skies can ever dull the meaning of this moment.

So on this solemn day, at this sacred hour, once more we pause. Once more we pray as a nation and as a people, in city streets where our two towers were turned to ashes and dust, in a quiet field where a plane fell from the sky, and here, where a single stone of this building is still blackened by the fires.

We remember with reverence the lives we lost. We read their names; we press their photos to our hearts. And on this day that marks their death, we recall the beauty and meaning of their lives, men and women and children of every color and every creed, from across our Nation and from more than 100 others. They were innocent. Harming no one, they went about their daily lives. Gone in a horrible instant, they now "dwell in the House of the Lord forever."

We honor all those who gave their lives so that others might live and all the survivors who battled burns and wounds and helped each other rebuild their lives, men and women who gave life to that most simple of rules: I am my brother's keeper; I am my sister's keeper.

We pay tribute to the service of a new generation, young Americans raised in a time of peace and plenty who saw their Nation in its hour of need and said, "I choose to serve. I will do my part." And once more we grieve. For you and your families, no words can ease the ache of your heart, no deeds can fill the empty places in your homes. But on this day and all that follow, you may find solace in the memory of those you loved, and know that you have the unending support of the American people.

Scripture teaches us a hard truth: The mountains may fall and the Earth may give way; the flesh and the heart may fail. But after all our suffering, God and grace will "restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast." So it is, so it has been for these families, so it must be for our Nation.

Let us renew our resolve against those who perpetrated this barbaric act and who plot against us still. In defense of our Nation, we will never waver; in pursuit of Al Qaida and its extremist allies, we will never falter.

Let us renew our commitment to all those who serve in our defense, our courageous men and women in uniform and their families and all those who protect us here at home. Mindful that the work of protecting America is never finished, we will do everything in our power to keep America safe.

Let us renew the true spirit of that day. Not the human capacity for evil, but the human capacity for good. Not the desire to destroy, but the impulse to save and to serve and to build. On this first National Day of Service and Remembrance, we can summon once more that ordinary goodness of America to serve our communities, to strengthen our country, and to better our world.

Most of all, on a day when others sought to sap our confidence, let us renew our common purpose. Let us remember how we came together as one Nation, as one people, as Americans, united not only in our grief, but in our resolve to stand with one another, to stand up for the country we all love.

This may be the greatest lesson of this day, the strongest rebuke to those who attacked us, the highest tribute to those taken from us, that

such sense of purpose need not be a fleeting moment. It can be a lasting virtue. For through their own lives and through you, the loved ones that they left behind, the men and women who lost their lives 8 years ago today leave a legacy that still shines brightly in the darkness and that calls on all of us to be strong and firm and united. That is our calling today and in all the Septembers still to come.

May God bless you and comfort you. And may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:34 a.m. at the Pentagon.

The President's Weekly Address
September 12, 2009

On Wednesday, I addressed a joint session of Congress and the American people about why we need health insurance reform and what it will take to do it. Since then, I've continued to hear from many Americans across the country about why this is so urgent and important.

I've heard from Americans who can't get health coverage, men and women who worry that one accident or illness could drive them into bankruptcy. And I've heard from Americans with insurance who thought that "the uninsured" always referred to someone else, but between skyrocketing costs and insurance company practices, they're beginning to worry that they could find themselves uninsured too.

It's an anxiety that's keeping more and more Americans awake at night. Over the last 12 months, nearly 6 million more Americans lost their health coverage; that's 17,000 men and women every single day. We're not just talking about Americans in poverty, either; we're talking about middle class Americans. In other words, it can happen to anyone.

And based on a brand new report from the Treasury Department, we can expect that about half of all Americans under 65 will lose their health coverage at some point over the next 10 years. If you're under the age of 21 today, chances are more than half that you'll find yourself uninsured at some point in that time. And more than one-third of Americans will go without coverage for longer than 1 year.

I refuse to allow that future to happen. In the United States of America, no one should have to worry that they'll go without health insurance, not for 1 year, not for 1 month, not for 1 day. And once I sign my health reform plan into law, they won't. My plan will provide more security and stability to those who have health insurance, offer quality, affordable choices to those who currently don't, and bring health care costs for our families, our businesses, and our Government under control.

First of all, if you are among the hundreds of millions of Americans who already have insurance through your job or Medicare or Medicaid or the VA, nothing in my plan will require you or your employer to change the coverage or the doctor you have.

What my plan will do is make the insurance you have work better for you. We'll make it illegal for insurance companies to deny you coverage because of a preexisting condition or drop your coverage when you get sick or water it down when you need it the most. They'll no longer be able to place some arbitrary cap on the amount of coverage you can receive in a given year or over a lifetime, and we will place a limit on how much you can be charged for out-of-pocket expenses, because no one should go broke just because they get sick.

Second, if you're one of the more than 30 million Americans who can't get coverage, you'll finally have quality, affordable choices. If you lose your job, change your job, or start your own business, you will be able to get coverage.

And as I have said over and over again, I will not sign a plan that adds one dime to our deficits, period. This plan will be paid for. The middle class will realize greater security, not higher taxes. And if we can successfully slow the growth of health care costs by just one-tenth of 1 percent each year, it will actually reduce the deficit by $4 trillion over the long term.

Affordable, quality care within the reach of tens of millions of Americans who don't have it today, stability and security for the hundreds of millions who do, that's the reform we seek. We

have had a long and important debate, but now is the time for action. Because every day we wait, more Americans will lose their health care, their businesses, and their homes, but also the dreams they've worked for and the peace of mind they deserve. They are why we have to succeed.

So if you're willing to put country before party and the interests of our children above our own, if you refuse to settle for a politics where scoring points is more important than solving problems, and if you believe, as I do, that America can still come together to do great things, then join us. Give us your help, and we will finally get health insurance reform done this year.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2 p.m. on September 11 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on September 12. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 11, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on September 12.

Remarks in Minneapolis, Minnesota
September 12, 2009

The President. Hello, Minnesota! Hello, Minneapolis! Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Are you fired up? Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, everybody.

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. Thank you. Thank you, everybody. All right, all right. Thank you. Everybody take a seat. Take a seat. Great to see you. It is good to see you all. It's good to be back in Minnesota.

Now, before I do anything else, I want to get to some very important news. I hear the Gophers have their home opener in their brand new stadium a little later today. I want to make sure you know I wish the Gophers luck. But they are playing Air Force, and I have to fly back home on one of their planes in a few hours. [*Laughter*] So I got to be careful about what I say.

We've got some wonderful people who are here today with me, and I just want to make some special acknowledgments. First of all, your two outstanding Senators, Senator Amy Klobuchar and Senator Al Franken, are in the house. My great friend who was part of the Obama for President movement before I decided to run for President, R.T. Rybak, mayor of Minneapolis, is in the house. The mayor of the great city of St. Paul, Chris Coleman, is in the house. Your attorney general, Lori Swanson, is in the house. Your State auditor, Rebecca Otto, is here. And one of the finest public servants in the country, my Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, is here.

Also, the biggest Obama fan in the country is in the house. Love this guy. Michelle has a picture where she looks like Sasha next to this guy. [*Laughter*] He's a great supporter, and it's great to see you again.

You know, I don't know if any of you caught it on television—you may have been watching "So You Think You Can Dance"—[*laughter*]—but—Michelle loves that show, by the way—[*laughter*]—but the other night, I gave a speech to Congress about health care. And I have to say, I can already see that this crowd is a lot more fun. [*Laughter*] But listen, I didn't go to Congress to—just to speak to Senators or Representatives; I went to speak on behalf of the American people. Because, you see, I ran for this office because I believed it was time for a Government that once again made possible the dreams of middle class Americans—that we're looking out for ordinary people—a Government that understands the quiet struggles that you wrestle with at the kitchen table when you're going through all the bills, or when you're lying awake at night at the end of a long day and trying to figure out what you're going to do about health care for your children or what you're going to do about the situation with your mortgage; worrying about how stable your job is and what's happening with the economy; seniors who are worrying about their retirement security.

You know and I know that health care is one of those fundamental struggles, because if you're one of the tens of millions of Americans who have no health insurance, you live every day just one accident or illness away from bankruptcy. And contrary to some of the myths out there, these aren't primarily people who are deep in poverty. A lot of those folks are on Medicaid. These are people who are working every day; these are middle class Americans. Maybe your employer doesn't offer coverage. Maybe you're self-employed and you can't afford it because it costs you three times more in the marketplace than it does for big companies. Maybe you're one of the millions of Americans who's denied coverage because of a previous illness or condition, no fault of your own, but insurance companies decide it's too risky or too expensive for you to cover.

In the last 12 months alone, 6 million more Americans lost their health insurance—6 million more. Today we received more disturbing news. A new report from the Treasury Department found that nearly half of all Americans under 65 will lose their health coverage at some point over the next 10 years.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Think about that. More than one-third will go out—go without coverage for longer than 1 year.

Audience member. We got to do something.

The President. We got to do something. We've got to do something because it can happen to anyone. There but for the grace of God go I. It could happen to anyone.

But I don't need to tell you that our health care problems don't stop with the uninsured. How many of you who have insurance have ever worried that you might lose it if you lost your jobs or you changed jobs or you had to move? How many stories have you heard about folks whose insurance company decided to drop their coverage or water it down when they get sick and need it the most? How many of you know somebody who paid their premiums every month only to find out that their insurance company wouldn't cover the full cost of their care like they thought they would get?

We've all heard these stories. There's the father I met in Colorado whose child was diagnosed with severe hemophilia the day after he was born. Now, they had insurance, but there was a cap on their coverage. So once the child's medical bills began to pile up, the father was left to frantically search for another option or face tens of thousands of dollars in medical bills. Another woman from Texas was about to get a double mastectomy when her insurance company canceled her policy because they said she forgot to declare a case of acne—true story. By the time she had her insurance reinstated, her breast cancer had more than doubled in size. Small-businesspeople—I got a letter just this week from a small-business man. He said: "I don't know what to do. I've always provided health insurance for my families, but here, the attached bill shows that the premiums have gone up 48 percent in the last year, and I think that I'm probably going to have to stop providing health insurance for my employees. I don't want to, but I don't have a choice."

These stories are wrong; they are heartbreaking. Nobody should be treated that way in the United States of America, and that's why we're going to bring about change this year. It has now been nearly a century since Teddy Roosevelt first called for health reform. It's been attempted by nearly every President and Congress since. And our failure to get it done, year after year, decade after decade, it has placed a burden on families, on businesses, and on taxpayers, and we can't stand it any longer. We cannot sustain it any longer.

If we do nothing, your premiums will continue to rise faster than your wages. If we do nothing, more businesses will close down, fewer will face—fewer will be able to open in the first place. If we do nothing, we will eventually spend more on Medicare and Medicaid than every other Government program combined. That's not an option for the United States of America. So Minnesota, I may not be the first President to take up the cause of health care reform, but I am determined to be the last. We are going to get it done this year. We are going to get it done this year.

The good news—here's the good news: We are closer now to reform than we've ever been. We've debated this issue for better than a year now. And there's actually some solid agreement

on about 80 percent of what needs to be done. That's never happened before. We've got—our overall efforts have been supported by an unprecedented coalition of doctors and nurses and hospitals and seniors' groups, even drug companies, many of whom were opposed to reform in the past. This time they recognize, you know what, this is not going to be stopped; we've got to get on board.

Now, what we've also seen in these last few months is the same partisan spectacle that has left so many of you disappointed in Washington for so long. We've heard scare tactics instead of honest debate. Too many have used this opportunity to score short-term political points instead of working together to solve long-term challenges. I don't know if you agree with me, but I think the time for bickering is over. The time for games has passed. Now is the time for action. Now is the time to deliver on health care for every American.

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. Now, because even after the speech, there's been a lot of misinformation out there, I want you to know about this plan that I announced on Wednesday so that when you go talk to your neighbors and your friends, and you're at the water cooler or buying Starbucks or whatever it is that you're doing—[*laughter*]—I want you to be able to say to people, here's what's going on.

The plan I announced will provide more security and stability to those who have health insurance. It will provide insurance to those who don't. And it will slow the growth of health care costs for our families, our businesses, and our Government.

Let me give you some details. First of all, if you're among the hundreds of millions of Americans who already have health insurance through your job, or you've got health insurance through Medicare or Medicaid or the VA, nothing in this plan will require you or your employer to change your coverage or your doctor. All right? I want you to be clear about that. Let me repeat: Nothing in this plan requires you to change what you have if you're happy with it.

What this plan will do is to make your insurance work better for you. So under this plan, it will be against the law for insurance companies to deny you coverage because of a preexisting condition. When I sign this bill, it will be against the law for insurance companies to drop your coverage when you get sick or water it down when you need it the most. They will no longer be able to place some arbitrary cap on the amount of coverage you can receive in a given year or a lifetime. We will place a limit on how much you can be charged for out-of-pocket expenses, because in the United States of America, nobody should go broke because they got sick. And insurance companies will be required to cover, at no extra charge, routine checkups and preventive care, like mammograms and colonoscopies, because there's no reason we shouldn't be catching diseases like breast cancer or colon cancer before they get worse. That makes sense, it saves money, it saves lives.

Now, if you're one of the 10 million—tens of millions of Americans who don't currently have health insurance, the second part of this plan is going to finally offer you affordable choices. So if you lose your job or change jobs or want to start a business, you'll be able to get coverage. You will have confidence that affordable coverage is out there for you, and we will do this not, contrary to what folks say, by some Government takeover of health care. We will do this by setting up a new insurance exchange, a marketplace where individuals and small businesses will be able to shop for an affordable health insurance plan that works for them. And because they'll be one big group, these uninsured Americans will have the leverage to drive down costs and get a much better deal than they get right now. That's how large companies do it. That's how Government employees get their health insurance. That's how Members of Congress get good deals on their insurance. You should get the same deal that Members of Congress get.

Now, if you still can't afford the lower priced insurance available in the exchange, we're going to provide you or a small-business owner tax credits so that they can do it. And in the first few years that it takes up to the—it

takes to set up the exchange, because it will take a few years to get this all set up, even after it passes, but in the meantime, we want to make sure people get some immediate help. So we're going to immediately offer Americans with preexisting conditions who can't get coverage right now—we want to give them some low-cost coverage that will provide them protection from financial ruin if they become seriously ill.

Now, I've also said that one of the options in the insurance exchange, one of the options—most of the folks who are going to be offering insurance through the exchange are going to be private insurers—Blue Cross Blue Shield, Aetna, all these. Well, I think one of the options should be a public insurance option. Now let me be clear—let me be clear: It would only be an option. Nobody would be forced to choose it. No one with insurance would be affected by it. But what it would do is it would provide more choice and more competition. It would keep pressure on private insurers to keep their policies affordable, to treat their customers better.

I mean, think about it. It's the same way that public colleges and universities provide additional choice and competition to students. That doesn't inhibit private colleges and universities from thriving out there. The same should be true on the health care front.

Now, Minnesota, I have said that I'm open to different ideas on how to set this up. But I'm not going to back down from the basic principle that if Americans can't find affordable coverage, we're going to provide you a choice. And I will make sure that no Government bureaucrat or insurance company bureaucrat gets between you and the coverage that you need. That's a promise I will make.

Now, a lot of you might think this plan sounds pretty good, or when you're talking to your friends or neighbors, they might say, "Yes, that sounds all right, but let me ask you this: How are you going to pay for it?" And that's a legitimate concern. We've got—we inherited some big deficits and some big debt, and we've had a big economic crisis that has required us to take some extraordinary steps. So we're going to have to get control of our Federal budget. We have to do it.

So it's a legitimate question, but here's what you need to know. First of all, I will not sign a plan that adds one dime to our deficits, either now or in the future, no ifs, ands, or buts. Part of the reason that I faced these trillion-dollar deficits when I walked into the door of the White House is because there were a lot of initiatives over the last decade that weren't paid for, from the Iraq war to tax breaks for the wealthy. I will not make the same mistake when it comes to health care.

Second of all, we've estimated that most of this plan can be paid for by finding savings within the existing health care system, money that's already being spent, but spent badly, wasted and abused. Right now too much of your taxpayer dollars and too much of your savings, frankly, are spent on health care that doesn't make us healthier. That's not my judgment; that is the judgment of medical experts and doctors and nurses, health care professionals all across the country.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. We love nurses. I love you.

As I said on Wednesday night, this is also true when it comes to Medicare and Medicaid. And Medicare is one of these issues that has been really distorted in the debate. So I want—I spoke directly to seniors on Wednesday; I want to repeat what I said. We have stood up for four decades for the principle that after a lifetime of hard work, our seniors should not be left to struggle with medical bills they can't pay. That's the essence of Medicare; that's how Medicare was born. It remains a sacred trust. It needs to be passed on from one generation to the next.

That's why not a dollar of the Medicare trust fund will be used to pay for this plan—not one dollar. We will not be lowering benefits for senior citizens. The only thing that we will be doing is eliminating hundreds of billions of dollars of waste and fraud, as well as subsidies that are going to insurance company HMOs, subsidies that pad their profits but don't improve care.

The other thing we want to do is we want to create an independent commission of doctors and medical experts charged with identifying more waste in the years ahead. And that's going to ensure that Americans, seniors, get the

benefits that they've been promised. We'll ensure that Medicare is there for future generations, and we can use some of the savings we get to actually fill the gap of costs on prescription drugs that so many seniors are struggling with. We can save them thousands of dollars on prescription drug costs. That's what the plan will do for senior citizens.

So don't pay attention to these scary stories about how your benefits will be cut. That will not happen on my watch. In fact, the folks who are making the accusations, they're the ones who have been talking about cutting Medicare in the past. I will protect Medicare.

And here's the best thing—and this is important, especially for Minnesota, because Medicare is such a big part of the health care system—making that program more efficient can help usher in changes in the way that we deliver health care that reduces costs for everybody. We have long known that some places, including Minnesota, offer high-quality care at costs below average. Look at what the Mayo Clinic is able to do. It's got the best quality and the lowest cost of just about any system in the country. So what we want to do is we want to help the whole country learn from what Mayo is doing. We want to help the whole country learn some of the good things that are going on in Minnesota. That will save everybody money.

The commission can help encourage the adoption of commonsense best practices, everything from reducing infection rates for hospitals to helping teach doctors how to work together so when you go to the doctor's office, you don't have to take a test each time you see a doctor; you take one test, and they e-mail it to every doctor. Commonsense stuff like that.

Now, this is the plan I'm proposing. It incorporates ideas from Democrats and Republicans. And I'm going to keep on seeking common ground in the weeks ahead, and I've said to everybody in Congress, if you come to me with a set of serious proposals, I'm going to be there to listen, and my door is going to be open. But I also said—some of you heard me on Wednesday night—I will not waste time with people who think that it's just good politics to kill health care.

I'm not going to allow the special interests to use the same old tactics to keep things the way they are. I'm not going to let people misrepresent what's in my plan. I will not accept the status quo—not this time, not now. Minnesota, we are closer to reform than we've ever been before, but this is the hard part. This is when the special interests and the insurance companies and the folks who think, you know, this is a good way to bring Obama down.

This is when they're going to fight with everything they've got. This is when they'll spread all kinds of wild rumors designed to scare and intimidate people. That's why I need your help.

You know, there have been some of the pundits in Washington who have been saying, well, maybe you've been trying to do too much. Maybe you've been pushing too far too fast.

And I try to remind them—I said, listen, I never said change would be easy. Change is hard. It's always been hard. When FDR decided that Social Security was something that seniors needed, when FDR decided—when FDR introduced Social Security, you know what happened? They called it socialism. But senior citizens decided that you know what, if I've got some protection in my golden years, that's something that's worth fighting for. When Medicare was introduced as an idea, they said, "This is going to be a Government takeover of Medicare." But imagine what seniors would be dealing with right now if they didn't have Medicare. Every time we've made progress, it's because ordinary people banded together, and they stood up, and they said, "We've got to make progress. And we're going to push and we're going to prod until Washington finally reacts, finally responds."

I've always believed—because I've always believed that change doesn't come from the top down, it comes from the bottom up. It doesn't start in Washington, DC, it begins in places like Minneapolis, it begins in places like St. Paul. It begins with you sharing your stories, fighting for something better. That's how change happens. That's what's happening right now.

So, you know, I asked you at the beginning of the rally whether you were fired up. And some of you may have heard where that story comes from. But for those of you who don't know, I want to just tell this story real quick. My staff loves this story, so they always tell me, "Tell that story." [*Laughter*] But it bears on what's happening with health care today.

This is back at the beginning, when I was running for President. Nobody thought I could win; nobody could pronounce my name—[*laughter*]—and—nobody except R.T.; that was the only person who believed.

So I went down to—it was right at the beginning of the campaign—I went down to South Carolina to a legislative conference where I was supposed to be one of the speakers. And I was sitting next to a State representative there; nobody was that excited to see me. [*Laughter*] You know, I was—but I really needed some support and endorsements because South Carolina was an early State. So I said to this State representatives, "Will you endorse my campaign?" And she looked at me, and she said, "I will endorse your campaign if you come to my hometown of Greenwood, South Carolina." So I had had a—some wine, and I was feeling kind of desperate. [*Laughter*] I said, "Yes, I'll come to Greenwood. Be happy to do it." Only to find out that Greenwood is like an hour and a half from everyplace else. [*Laughter*] You can't fly into Greenwood.

About a month later, I've been campaigning in Iowa for weeks, haven't seen my family. I'm—[*applause*]—got some Iowa folks in the house. I'm exhausted. I get into Greenville, South Carolina, about midnight. I get to my hotel about 1 o'clock. I'm dragging to the hotel. I'm carrying my bags, ready to hit the pillow. And suddenly my staff says, "Sir?" I said, "What?" [*Laughter*] They said, "Sir, you have to be in the car at 6:30 tomorrow—in the morning." [*Laughter*] I said, "Why is that?" They said, "Because you've got to go to Greenwood like you promised."

Next morning, I wake up, and I feel awful. I feel terrible. I'm exhausted. And I stagger over to the window to pull open the blinds, and it's pouring down rain outside, terrible day. And I go out, and I get some coffee and open up the newspaper—bad story about me in the New York Times. [*Laughter*] I pack up; I go downstairs. As I'm walking to the car, my umbrella blows open—[*laughter*]—and I get drenched. So by the time I'm in the car, I'm wet, and I'm sleepy, and I'm mad. [*Laughter*]

And I drive—and we drive, and we drive, and we drive—hour and a half, we just keep on driving. Finally, we get to Greenwood, although you don't know that you're in Greenwood right away. [*Laughter*] It's not like Minneapolis. [*Laughter*] So there's a little field house in a park, and we go into the field house. I walk in—I get a little more wet. I walk in there, lo and behold, 20 people there—[*laughter*]—20 people. And I'm already thinking about the fact I've got another hour and a half I've got to drive back. [*Laughter*] And they're all kind of damp, and they don't look like they're that happy to be there. The State rep had dragged them to the meeting. [*Laughter*]

But that's okay. I have a job to do; I'm running for President. I shake their hand, I say, "How do you do? What do you do? Nice to meet you." Suddenly I hear this voice shout out behind me: "Fired up?" [*Laughter*] And I almost jumped out of my shoes. [*Laughter*] But everybody else acts like this is normal, and they all say, "Fired up!" And then I hear this voice: "Ready to go?" And the people around me, they just say, "Ready to go!" I don't know what's going on. So I look behind me, and there's this little woman there. She's about 5′2″, 5′3″, she's maybe 50, 60 years old, and she looks like she's dressed for church. She's got a big church hat. [*Laughter*] And she's just grinning at me, just smiling. And she points at me, and she says "Fired up?" [*Laughter*]

Now—[*applause*]—wait, wait, the story gets better here. It turns out that she is a city councilwoman from Greenwood named Edith Childs—that's her name—and she's also known as the chant lady because she does this chant wherever she goes. She goes: "Fired up?" "Fired up!" "Ready to go?" "Ready to go!" [*Laughter*] And she does this at every event she goes to. She's also—by the way, we discovered later, she also moonlights as a private detective, but that's a—[*laughter*]—true story—true story.

But she's well known for her chant, so for the next 5 minutes, she starts chanting. She says, "Fired up?" And everybody says, "Fired up!" "Ready to go?" "Ready to go!" And this just keeps on going on. And I realize I'm being upstaged by this woman. [*Laughter*] And I'm—she's getting all the attention, and I'm standing there looking at my staff, and they're shrugging their shoulders. [*Laughter*] But here's the thing, Minneapolis: After about a minute, maybe 2, I'm feeling kind of fired up. [*Laughter*] I'm feeling like I'm ready to go.

And so for the rest of the day, every time I saw my staff, I'd say, "Are you fired up?" They'd say, "I'm fired up." "Are you ready to go?" They'd say, "I'm ready to go." And it goes to show you how one voice can change a room. And if it changes a room, it can change a city. And if it can change a city, it can change a State. And if it can change a State, it can change a nation. If it change the nation, it can change the world. It can bring health care to every American. It can lower our costs. It can make your insurance more secure. I want to know, Minnesota, are you fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. Fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. Fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. They can't stop us. Let's go get this done. Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. at the Target Center. In his remarks, he referred to audience member Igor Vovkovinskiy; Nathan Wilkes, principal network architect, Virtela Communications, Inc., and his son Thomas; and South Carolina State Rep. J. Anne Parks.

Remarks in New York City
September 14, 2009

Thank you. Please have a seat. Thank you very much. It is wonderful to be back in New York after having just been here last week. It is a beautiful day, and we have some extraordinary guests here in the Hall today. I just want to mention a few.

First of all, from my economic team, somebody who I think has done extraordinary work on behalf of all Americans and has helped to strengthen our financial system immeasurably, Secretary Tim Geithner; please give him a big round of applause. Somebody who is continually guiding me and keeping me straight on the numbers, the Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers, Christina Romer, is here. We have an extraordinary Economic Recovery Board, and as chairman, somebody who knows more about the financial markets and the economy generally than just about anybody in this country, Paul Volcker. Thank you, Paul. The outstanding mayor of the city of New York, Mr. Michael Bloomberg; we have—Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver is here as well—thank you.

We have a host of Members of Congress, but there's one that I have to single out because he is going to be helping to shape the agenda going forward to make sure that we have one of the strongest, most dynamic, and most innovative financial markets in the world for many years to come, and that's my good friend Barney Frank. I also want to thank our hosts from the National Park Service here at Federal Hall and all the other outstanding public officials who are here.

Thanks for being here. Thank you for your warm welcome. It's a privilege to be in historic Federal Hall. It was here more than two centuries ago that our First Congress served and our first President was inaugurated. And I just had a chance to glance at the Bible upon which George Washington took his oath. It was here, in the early days of the Republic, that Hamilton and Jefferson debated how best to administer a young economy and ensure

that our Nation rewarded the talents and drive of its people. And two centuries later, we still grapple with these questions, questions made more acute in moments of crisis.

Now, it was 1 year ago today that we experienced just such a crisis. As investors and pension holders watched with dread and dismay and after a series of emergency meetings often conducted in the dead of the night, several of the world's largest and oldest financial institutions had fallen, either bankrupt, bought, or bailed out: Lehman Brothers, Merrill Lynch, AIG, Washington Mutual, Wachovia. A week before this began, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac had been taken over by the Government. Other large firms teetered on the brink of insolvency. Credit markets froze as banks refused to lend not only to families and businesses, but to one another. Five trillion dollars of Americans' household wealth evaporated in the span of just 3 months. That was just 1 year ago.

And Congress and the previous administration took difficult but necessary action in the days and months that followed. Nonetheless, when this administration walked through the door in January, the situation remained urgent. The markets had fallen sharply, credit was not flowing. It was feared that the largest banks, those that remained standing, had too little capital and far too much exposure to risky loans. And the consequences had spread far beyond the streets of lower Manhattan. This was no longer just a financial crisis, it had become a full-blown economic crisis, with home prices sinking and businesses struggling to access affordable credit and the economy shedding an average of 700,000 jobs every single month.

We could not separate what was happening in the corridors of our financial institutions from what was happening on the factory floors and around the kitchen tables. Home foreclosures linked those who took out home loans and those who repackaged those loans as securities. A lack of access to affordable credit threatened the health of large firms and small businesses, as well as all those whose jobs depended on them. And a weakened financial system weakened the broader economy, which in turn further weakened the financial system.

So the only way to address successfully any of these challenges was to address them together. And this administration, under the outstanding leadership of Tim Geithner and Christy Romer and Larry Summers and others, moved quickly on all fronts, initializing a financial stability plan to rescue the system from the crisis and restart lending for all those affected by the crisis. By opening and examining the books of large financial firms, we helped restore the availability of two things that had been in short supply: capital and confidence. By taking aggressive and innovative steps in credit markets, we spurred lending not just to banks, but to folks looking to buy homes or cars, take out student loans, or finance small businesses. Our homeownership plan has helped responsible homeowners refinance to stem the tide of lost homes and lost home values.

And the recovery plan is providing help to the unemployed and tax relief for working families, all the while spurring consumer spending. It's prevented layoffs of tens of thousands of teachers and police officers and other essential public servants. And thousands of recovery projects are underway all across America, including right here in New York City, putting people to work building wind turbines and solar panels, renovating schools and hospitals, repairing our Nation's roads and bridges.

Eight months later, the work of recovery continues. And though I will never be satisfied while people are out of work and our financial system is weakened, we can be confident that the storms of the past 2 years are beginning to break. In fact, while there continues to be a need for Government involvement to stabilize the financial system, that necessity is waning. After months in which public dollars were flowing into our financial system, we're finally beginning to see money flowing back to taxpayers. This doesn't mean taxpayers will escape the worst financial crisis in decades entirely unscathed. But banks have repaid more than $70 billion, and in those cases where the Government's stakes have been sold completely, taxpayers have actually earned a 17-percent return on their investment. Just a few months ago, many experts from across the ideological spectrum feared that ensuring financial stability

would require even more tax dollars. Instead, we've been able to eliminate a $250 billion reserve included in our budget because that fear has not been realized.

While full recovery of the financial system will take a great deal more time and work, the growing stability resulting from these interventions means we're beginning to return to normalcy. But here's what I want to emphasize today: Normalcy cannot lead to complacency.

Unfortunately, there are some in the financial industry who are misreading this moment. Instead of learning the lessons of Lehman and the crisis from which we're still recovering, they're choosing to ignore those lessons. I'm convinced they do so not just at their own peril, but at our Nation's. So I want everybody here to hear my words: We will not go back to the days of reckless behavior and unchecked excess that was at the heart of this crisis, where too many were motivated only by the appetite for quick kills and bloated bonuses. Those on Wall Street cannot resume taking risks without regard for consequences and expect that next time American taxpayers will be there to break their fall.

And that's why we need strong rules of the road to guard against the kind of systemic risks that we've seen. And we have a responsibility to write and enforce these rules to protect consumers of financial products, to protect taxpayers, and to protect our economy as a whole. Yes, there must—these rules must be developed in a way that doesn't stifle innovation and enterprise. And I want to say very clearly here today, we want to work with the financial industry to achieve that end. But the old ways that led to this crisis cannot stand. And to the extent that some have so readily returned to them underscores the need for change, and change now. History cannot be allowed to repeat itself.

So what we're calling for is for the financial industry to join us in a constructive effort to update the rules and regulatory structure to meet the challenges of this new century. That is what my administration seeks to do. We've sought ideas and input from industry leaders and policy experts, academics, consumer advocates, and the broader public. And we've worked closely with leaders in the Senate and the House, including not only Barney, but also Senators Chris Dodd and Richard Shelby. And Barney is already working with his counterpart, Sheldon [Spencer]* Bachus, and we intend to pass regulatory reform through Congress.

And taken together, we're proposing the most ambitious overhaul of the financial regulatory system since the Great Depression. But I want to emphasize that these reforms are rooted in a simple principle: We ought to set clear rules of the road that promote transparency and accountability. That's how we'll make certain that markets foster responsibility, not recklessness. That's how we'll make certain that markets reward those who compete honestly and vigorously within the system, instead of those who are trying to game the system.

So let me outline specifically what we're talking about. First, we're proposing new rules to protect consumers and a new consumer financial protection agency to enforce those rules. This crisis was not just the result of decisions made by the mightiest of financial firms. It was also the result of decisions made by ordinary Americans to open credit cards and take on mortgages. And while there were many who took out loans they knew they couldn't afford, there were also millions of Americans who signed contracts they didn't fully understand, offered by lenders who didn't always tell the truth.

This is in part because there is no single agency charged with making sure that doesn't happen. That's what we intend to change. The consumer financial protection agency will have the power to make certain that consumers get information that is clear and concise and to prevent the worst kinds of abuses. Consumers shouldn't have to worry about loan contracts designed to be unintelligible, hidden fees attached to their mortgage, and financial penalties, whether through a credit card or a debit card, that appear without warning on their statements. And responsible lenders, including

* White House correction.

community banks, doing the right thing shouldn't have to worry about ruinous competition from unregulated competitors.

Now, there are those who are suggesting that somehow this will restrict the choices available to consumers. Nothing could be further from the truth. The lack of clear rules in the past meant we had the wrong kind of innovation: The firm that could make its products look the best by doing the best job of hiding the real costs ended up getting the business. For example, we had teaser rates on credit cards and mortgages that lured people in and then surprised them with big rate increases. By setting ground rules, we'll increase the kind of competition that actually provides people better and greater choices as companies compete to offer the best products, not the ones that are most complex or the most confusing.

Second, we've got to close the loopholes that were at the heart of the crisis. Where there were gaps in the rules, regulators lacked the authority to take action. Where there were overlaps, regulators often lacked accountability for inaction. These weaknesses in oversight engendered systematic and systemic abuse.

Under existing rules, some companies can actually shop for the regulator of their choice, and others, like hedge funds, can operate outside of the regulatory system altogether. We've seen the development of financial instruments, like derivatives and credit default swaps, without anyone examining the risks or regulating all of the players. And we've seen lenders profit by providing loans to borrowers who they knew would never repay, because the lender offloaded the loan and the consequences to somebody else. Those who refuse to game the system are at a disadvantage.

Now, one of the main reasons this crisis could take place is that many agencies and regulators were responsible for oversight of individual financial firms and their subsidiaries, but no one was responsible for protecting the system as the whole—as a whole. In other words, regulators were charged with seeing the trees, but not the forest. And even then, some firms that posed a systemic risk were not regulated as strongly as others, exploiting loopholes in the system to take on greater risk with less scrutiny. As a result, the failure of one firm threatened the viability of many others. We were facing one of the largest financial crises in history, and those responsible for oversight were caught off guard and without the authority to act.

And that's why we'll create clear accountability and responsibility for regulating large financial firms that pose a systemic risk. While holding the Federal Reserve fully accountable for regulation of the largest, most interconnected firms, we'll create an oversight council to bring together regulators from across markets to share information, to identify gaps in regulation, and to tackle issues that don't fit neatly into an organizational chart. We'll also require these financial firms to meet stronger capital and liquidity requirements and observe greater constraints on their risky behavior. That's one of the lessons of the past year. The only way to avoid a crisis of this magnitude is to ensure that large firms can't take risks that threaten our entire financial system and to make sure that they have the resources to weather even the worst of economic storms.

Even as we've proposed safeguards to make the failure of large and interconnected firms less likely, we've also created—proposed creating what's called resolution authority in the event that such a failure happens and poses a threat to the stability of the financial system. This is intended to put an end to the idea that some firms are too big to fail. For a market to function, those who invest and lend in that market must believe that their money is actually at risk. And the system as a whole isn't safe until it is safe from the failure of any individual institution.

If a bank approaches insolvency, we have a process through the FDIC that protects depositors and maintains confidence in the banking system. This process was created during the Great Depression, when the failure of one bank led to runs on other banks, which in turn threatened the banking system as a whole. That system works. But we don't have any kind of process in place to contain the failure of a Lehman Brothers or AIG or any of the largest and most interconnected financial firms in our country.

And that's why, when this crisis began, crucial decisions about what would happen to some

of the world's biggest companies—companies employing tens of thousands of people and holding trillions of dollars of assets—took place in hurried discussions in the middle of the night. That's why we've had to rely on taxpayer dollars. The only resolution authority we currently have that would prevent a financial meltdown involved tapping the Federal Reserve or the Federal Treasury. With so much at stake, we should not be forced to choose between allowing a company to fail into a rapid and chaotic dissolution that threatens the economy and innocent people or, alternatively, forcing taxpayers to foot the bill. So our plan would put the cost of a firm's failures on those who own its stock and loaned it money. And if taxpayers ever have to step in again to prevent a second great depression, the financial industry will have to pay the taxpayer back every cent.

Finally, we need to close the gaps that exist not just within this country, but among countries. The United States is leading a coordinated response to promote recovery and to restore prosperity among both the world's largest economies and the world's fastest growing economies. At a summit in London in April, leaders agreed to work together in an unprecedented way to spur global demand but also to address the underlying problems that caused such a deep and lasting global recession. And this work will continue next week in Pittsburgh when I convene the G–20, which has proven to be an effective forum for coordinating policies among key developed and emerging economies and one that I see taking on an important role in the future.

Essential to this effort is reforming what's broken in the global financial system, a system that links economies and spreads both rewards and risks. For we know that abuses in financial markets anywhere can have an impact everywhere, and just as gaps in domestic regulation lead to a race to the bottom, so do gaps in regulation around the world. What we need instead is a global race to the top, including stronger capital standards, as I've called for today. As the United States is aggressively reforming our regulatory system, we're going to be working to ensure that the rest of the world does the same. And this is something that Secretary Geithner has already been actively meeting with finance ministers around the world to discuss.

A healthy economy in the 21st century also depends on our ability to buy and sell goods in markets across the globe. And make no mistake, this administration is committed to pursuing expanded trade and new trade agreements. It is absolutely essential to our economic future. And each time that we have met—at the G–20 and the G–8—we have reaffirmed the need to fight against protectionism. But no trading system will work if we fail to enforce our trade agreements, those that have already been signed. So when—as happened this weekend—we invoke provisions of existing agreements, we do so not to be provocative or to promote self-defeating protectionism; we do so because enforcing trade agreements is part and parcel of maintaining an open and free trading system.

And just as we have to live up to our responsibilities on trade, we have to live up to our responsibilities on financial reform as well. I have urged leaders in Congress to pass regulatory reform this year, and both Congressman Frank and Senator Dodd, who are leading this effort, have made it clear that that's what they intend to do. Now, there will be those who defend the status quo; there always are. There will be those who argue we should do less or nothing at all. There will be those who engage in revisionist history or have selective memories and don't seem to recall what we just went through last year. But to them I'd say only this: Do you really believe that the absence of sound regulation 1 year ago was good for the financial system? Do you believe the resulting decline in markets and wealth and unemployment, the wrenching hardship that families are going through all across the country, was somehow good for our economy? Was that good for the American people?

I have always been a strong believer in the power of the free market. I believe that jobs are best created not by government, but by businesses and entrepreneurs willing to take a risk on a good idea. I believe that the role of the government is not to disparage wealth, but

to expand its reach, not to stifle markets, but to provide the ground rules and level playing field that helps to make those markets more vibrant and that will allow us to better tap the creative and innovative potential of our people. For we know that it is the dynamism of our people that has been the source of America's progress and prosperity.

So I promise you, I did not run for President to bail out banks or intervene in capital markets. But it is important to note that the very absence of commonsense regulations able to keep up with a fast-paced financial sector is what created the need for that extraordinary intervention, not just with our administration, but the previous administration. The lack of sensible rules of the road, so often opposed by those who claim to speak for the free market, ironically led to a rescue far more intrusive than anything any of us, Democratic or Republican, progressive or conservative, would have ever proposed or predicted.

At the same time, we have to recognize that what's needed now goes beyond just the reforms that I've mentioned. For what took place 1 year ago was not merely a failure of regulation or legislation; it wasn't just a failure of oversight or foresight; it was also a failure of responsibility. It was fundamentally a failure of responsibility that allowed Washington to become a place where problems, including structural problems in our financial system, were ignored rather than solved. It was a failure of responsibility that led homebuyers and derivative traders alike to take reckless risks that they couldn't afford to take. It was a collective failure of responsibility in Washington, on Wall Street, and across America that led to the near-collapse of our financial system 1 year ago.

So restoring a willingness to take responsibility, even when it's hard to do, is at the heart of what we must do. Here on Wall Street, you have a responsibility. The reforms I've laid out will pass, and these changes will become law. But one of the most important ways to rebuild the system stronger than it was before is to rebuild trust stronger than before, and you don't have to wait for a new law to do that. You don't have to wait to use plain language in your dealings with consumers. You don't have to wait for legislation to put the 2009 bonuses of your senior executives up for a shareholder vote. You don't have to wait for a law to overhaul your pay system so that folks are rewarded for long-term performance instead of short-term gains.

The fact is, many of the firms that are now returning to prosperity owe a debt to the American people. They were not the cause of this crisis, and yet American taxpayers, through their Government, had to take extraordinary action to stabilize the financial industry. They shouldered the burden of the bailout, and they are still bearing the burden of the fallout, in lost jobs and lost homes and lost opportunities. It is neither right nor responsible, after you've recovered with the help of your Government, to shirk your obligation to the goal of wider recovery, a more stable system, and a more broadly shared prosperity.

So I want to urge you to demonstrate that you take this obligation to heart: to put greater effort into helping families who need their mortgages modified under my administration's homeownership plan; to help small-business owners who desperately need loans and who are bearing the brunt of the decline in available credit; to help communities that would benefit from the financing you could provide or the community development institutions you could support; to come up with creative approaches to improve financial education and to bring banking to those who live and work entirely outside of the banking system; and of course, to embrace serious financial reform, not resist it.

Just as we are asking the private sector to think about the long term, I recognize that Washington has to do so as well. When my administration came through the door, we not only faced a financial crisis and costly recession, we also found waiting a trillion-dollar deficit. So yes, we had to take extraordinary action in the wake of an extraordinary economic crisis. But I am absolutely committed to putting this Nation on a sound and secure fiscal footing. And that's why we're pushing to restore pay-as-you-go rules in Congress, because I will not go along with the old Washington ways which said it was okay to pass spending bills and tax cuts without a plan to pay for it. That's why we're cutting programs that don't work or are out of date.

That's why I've insisted that health insurance reform, as important as it is, not add a dime to the deficit, now or in the future.

There are those who would suggest that we must choose between markets unfettered by even the most modest of regulations and markets weighed down by onerous regulations that suppress the spirit of enterprise and innovation. If there is one lesson we can learn from last year, it is that this is a false choice. Commonsense rules of the road don't hinder the market, they make the market stronger. Indeed, they are essential to ensuring that our markets function fairly and freely.

One year ago, we saw in stark relief how markets can spin out of control, how a lack of commonsense rules can lead to excess and abuse, how close we can come to the brink. One year later, it is incumbent upon us to put in place those reforms that will prevent this kind of crisis from ever happening again, reflecting painful but important lessons that we've learned, and that will help us move from a period of reckless irresponsibility, a period of crisis, to one of responsibility and prosperity. That's what we must do, and I'm confident that's what we will do.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:59 a.m. at Federal Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner; New York State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver; and Lawrence H. Summers, Director, National Economic Council.

Remarks During a Discussion With General Motors Employees in Lordstown, Ohio
September 15, 2009

[*The President's remarks were joined in progress.*]

——the fact is, some of these schools, we've been doing the same things for years, and they're just not working. Okay? If you've got a 50-percent dropout rate, that's just—that is not just bad for the kids who are dropping out, that's bad for the community, that's bad for the country. The main decision for a lot of companies is where can they find skilled workers. And you guys know as well as anybody that it used to be if you wanted to work in an auto plant, you didn't have to really know much about math or computers or what have you. All you had to do was just be willing to work hard.

But these days, even if you're on the line—I haven't looked at this particular plant, but I know that you've got to be able to do some math, you've got to—there's some science and technical issues that are involved. And so how we train our young people is absolutely critical, and we've got to try some different things and some new things that we haven't been trying.

And the other thing we have to do is set up a system of community colleges so that we're constantly retraining. If there is innovation in the auto industry, we want to make sure that workers who are already working are able to go back to school, even if it's part time, night classes, what have you, so that they can then improve their skills. And that's something that has got to be a top priority.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:04 a.m. at General Motors Lordstown Assembly Plant.

Remarks at the General Motors Assembly Plant in Lordstown
September 15, 2009

Thank you, guys. It is good to be back in Ohio. And it's good to be at one of GM's flagship plants with all of you.

I've got a list of some wonderful people that I want to make sure I acknowledge real quick. First of all, a former colleague of mine,

somebody who is now collaborating with me to make sure that working people are getting a fair shake in this country, please give it up for your United States Senator Sherrod Brown—where's Sherrod?—there he is; your Congressman, doing an outstanding job, great young man, Tim Ryan; from the neighboring congressional district, somebody who is responsible for Cash for Clunkers, Betty Sutton; and an outstanding Congressman from Ohio as well, Charlie Wilson—give Charlie a big round of applause.

We've got a great trio of mayors here: Mayor Michael O'Brien of Warren, Michael Chaffee of Lordstown, and Mayor Jay Williams of Youngstown—give them all a big round of applause. We've got State Senator and Minority Leader Capri Cafaro is here. How are you? She's a fireplug. I remember her.

The CEO of General Motors, Fritz Henderson, is in the house; plant manager John Donahue is in the house; UAW servicing agent John Mohan is in the house; president of the UAW Local 1112, Jim Graham's in the house; president of Local 1714, David Green is in the house; chairperson of 1112, Ben Strickland; and chairperson of Local 1714, Will Adams.

Well, listen, I just finished having a productive discussion with some of your coworkers about the challenges you're facing, both here and in your communities, and how we can meet them. We talked about the economic troubles that you've been weathering here in Trumbull County since long before our current crisis. Yes, if you've got chairs, go ahead, feel free to sit down. [*Laughter*] You don't have to stand this whole time.

But let's face it, we've been going through some crises since before this economic crisis—this financial crisis hit. Over the years, you've seen factories close. You've seen friends and neighbors and relatives laid off. Your daughters and sons have had to move away in search of jobs and opportunity. I know it was painful around here earlier this year, when three shifts at this plant were cut down to one. Today, the local unemployment rate is unacceptably high in this region, second highest in Ohio. So I know at times, it seems like this community has been on the brink, over and over and over again.

And there's some who see this pain and suggest that somehow it's inevitable, that the only way for America to get ahead is for communities like yours to be left behind. But I know better; we know better. We know that our success as a nation depends on the success of communities just like this one. We know that the battle for America's future is not just going to be won in the big cities, not just on the coasts, but in towns like Elkhart, Indiana, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Warren and Youngstown. That's what we're fighting for.

That's why I'm proud to be here with all of you. You work hard. You meet your responsibilities. You deserve better. You deserve better than the attitude that's prevailed in Washington and Wall Street and sometimes in Detroit for far too long, an attitude that valued wealth over work and selfishness over sacrifice and greed over responsibility. That's why I want you to know that every day that I step into the Oval Office, I am thinking about you and your families, I am fighting for you and your families, and I'm going to keep on doing it as long as I'm President of the United States.

Now, sometimes that involves making tough decisions that have been put off for too long. That's my job: making tough decisions. If it's an easy decision, it doesn't get to my desk. As I've said before, I didn't run for President to manage auto companies. It wasn't something on my to-do list. It wasn't even something on my want-to-do list. [*Laughter*] I like driving cars. [*Laughter*] Sometimes, you know, I can change a spark plug or change a tire, but I don't know so much about cars that I wanted to be deeply involved in the car industry.

But here's what I knew: I wasn't going to put any more tax dollars on the line if it meant perpetuating bad business decisions that got us to a point where the U.S auto industry was in crisis. But in the midst of a deep recession and financial crisis, for me to have just let the auto industry collapse, to vanish, would have caused unbelievable damage to our economy, not just here in Lordstown, but all across the country. So we intervened for one simple and compelling reason: Your survival and the success of our

economy depended on making sure that we got the U.S. auto industry back on its feet.

And there were some people who said you can't do it. But our belief was that if GM retooled and reinvented itself for the 21st century, it would be good for American workers, it would be good for American manufacturing, it would be good for America's economy. And I'm pleased to report that that is exactly what has begun to happen at plants like this and others across the country. So I know that some of those decisions may not have been popular, but I will tell you what: I will double down on the American people and the American worker and all of you any day of the week.

Now, one of the other efforts we undertook was the Cash for Clunkers program. Folks said that wouldn't work either. That program was good for automakers, it was good for consumers, and, by the way, it was good for our environment. And you know what? The Chevy Cobalt that you build here was one of GM's most sought-after cars under that program. Dealers across the country started running out. You need to build more.

And one other thing: For too long, our auto industries faced uncertain and conflicting fuel economy standards. And that made it difficult for you to plan down the road. And that's why today we are launching—for the first time in history—a new national standard aimed at both increasing gas mileage and decreasing greenhouse gas pollution for all cars and trucks sold in America. It creates an even playing field. It's an action that is long overdue. It will give our auto companies clarity and stability and predictability.

In the past, an agreement like this would have been impossible, but this time it was different because automakers, the UAW, environmental advocates, Democrats, Republicans, States all across the country, all of them came together, pledging to set aside the quarrels of the past for the sake of the future.

Because of the steps we've taken, this plant is about to shift into high gear. A hundred and fifty of your coworkers came back to work yesterday. More than 1,000 will be coming back to work in less than 3 weeks as production of the Cobalt ramps up. [*Applause*] That's worth standing for.

And next year, this plant will begin production of the Chevy Cruze, a new car that will get more than 40 miles per gallon. I just sat in the car. I asked for the keys; they wouldn't give me the keys. [*Laughter*] I was going to take it for a little spin. [*Laughter*] But it was nice sitting in there. It was a roomy car, 40 miles per gallon.

So if you picked up a copy of the Youngstown Vindicator back in January, you would have seen a headline that read: "Worries mount in wake of layoffs." A couple weeks ago, you would have read a different story: "Good news at Lordstown is good news for all." And today you made, by the way, some more good news: I understand that the one-millionth Cobalt rolled off the assembly line late last night.

So I don't want to just congratulate you; I want to thank you. You're doing your part to move us forward and make sure that the high-quality, well engineered, safe, and fuel-efficient cars of the future will be built where they've always been built, right here in Ohio, right across the Midwest, right here in the United States of America.

Now, even though you're proving that American automakers are getting back in the game, I think everybody understands our economic troubles are far from over. I don't want to overpromise here. We've still got a lot of work to do. We got in a deep hole over a course of years; it's going to take some years to get back out of this hole. We have a lot of work to do not just to get this community moving again and this economy moving again, but we've got to build a stronger foundation for economic growth into the future.

There's some people in Washington, they've already forgotten just what it was that we walked into 8 months ago. So let me just go through—let me go through the facts here real quick in case you all have forgotten: a financial system near collapse; 700,000 workers losing their jobs every single month; a sudden decline in credit that made it difficult to take out a mortgage, or a student loan, or a small business loan, or an auto loan. You couldn't get an auto loan. It was so bad that experts of all

political persuasions feared a second coming of the Great Depression.

So we took bold, swift action to make sure that didn't happen. We moved to keep responsible homeowners in their homes. We moved to jump-start lending. We passed a sweeping Recovery Act without the usual Washington earmarks or porkbarrel spending, but putting people back to work. And that plan is now working.

I want you to know what's happened here. One-third of our Recovery Act went to tax relief; we cut your taxes. Ninety-five percent of America's working families—4.5 million families right here in Ohio—we cut your taxes. And we cut taxes for small businesses on investments that they make.

That was a third of our Recovery Act. And that gave everybody a little more money in their pockets to spend, which helped boost the economy. Then what we did was we put another third into emergency relief. All those Americans who were laid off, we extended unemployment benefits, and that's made a difference for 12 million Americans, including 570,000 right here in Ohio.

And for all those people who had lost their jobs, they were worried about losing their health care, they were going to have to try to get on COBRA, but you know how much COBRA costs, having to pick up your whole health care premium. So what we did was we made health insurance through COBRA 65 percent cheaper for families while they were looking for work. We saved the jobs of tens of thousands of State and local workers, including 336 police officers right here in Ohio. That was part of our Recovery Act.

Now, the last third is investing in your towns and your future. Over in Canfield, we awarded a competitive contract to a local company to repair a bridge on Route 11. That allowed them to avoid layoffs they were otherwise going to make. That allowed local folks to keep coming to work, doing the work America needs done. We've got projects like that all across Ohio and all across the country, rebuilding our roads and our bridges, laying broadband lines, making sure that we're building the wind turbines and solar panels that are going to drive our energy future. That's what the Recovery Act has been all about.

Now, we've still got a long way to go, but there is little debate that the decisions we've made and the steps we've taken helped stop our economic freefall. In some places, they've helped us turn the corner. Home sales are up; business investment is starting to stabilize. For the first time in 18 months, we're actually seeing growth in American manufacturing instead of decline.

I know that's small consolation when so many people you know are still out of work. It's going to take some time to achieve a complete recovery. But I want you to all know, I will not rest until anybody who's looking for a job can find one, and I'm not talking about just any job, but good jobs that give every American decent wages and decent benefits and a fair shot at the American Dream. That's what I'm fighting for every single day.

We're fighting for an America where your children will be armed with the skills they need to compete with any worker, anywhere in the world. We're making a historic commitment to strengthening and improving education from cradle to a career. And I've set a goal: By 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. There's no reason why we can't have that number-one ranking once again.

We're fighting for an America where clean energy generates green jobs that can't be outsourced, that help us free ourselves from our grip of foreign oil; jobs that make sure the cars of the future and the technologies like the new batteries that power them are made right here in the United States of America.

And yes, just in case you were wondering, we are fighting for an America where no American should have to worry about going without health insurance or feel that one illness could cost them everything they have. We're going to reform the system to provide more security and stability to those of you who have health insurance. We're going to offer quality, affordable choices to those who currently don't have health insurance. And we're going to bring health care costs for our families and our businesses and our Government under control.

Think about it: If you're a member of the union right now, you're spending all your time negotiating about health care. You need to be spending some time negotiating about wages, but you can't do it—[*applause*]—but I want to make sure that you understand—you've got to understand Fritz's position here; he's trying to build this company back up. And if health care costs are going up 30 percent or 20 percent every year, it's very tough for him. So we all have an interest in reforming the health care system so that the cost for employers don't go up; that means the cost for you don't go up, and that means you can actually start bringing home a little more take-home pay. That's what this is all about if you've already got health insurance.

So that's what we're fighting for: to bring Lordstown and Youngstown and Warren back; to make sure that our towns and our middle class—a middle class forged just like in plants that you're seeing here—I want them not just to survive today, but to thrive tomorrow.

I want you to deliver a message to the GM team members who are manning the line and couldn't join us today: As long as you've still got an ounce of fight left in you, I've got a ton of fight left in me. I've said it before, I'm skinny, but I'm tough. [*Laughter*] And as long as I have the privilege of being your President, I'm going to keep fighting for a future that is brighter for this community and brighter for Ohio and brighter for the United States of America.

I need your help, so give it to me, guys, because we're going to rebuild right here, right now. We're going to make Ohio work again. Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:13 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to John Mohan, shop chairman, United Auto Workers Local 1112.

Remarks at the AFL–CIO National Convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
September 15, 2009

The President. Thank you very much, everybody. All right, you guys are making me blush. Thank you.

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. Thank you so much, everybody. You know, I tell you what, the White House is pretty nice, but there's nothing like being back in the House of Labor. Let me begin by recognizing a man who came to Washington to fight for the working men and women of Pennsylvania and who has a distinguished record of doing just that, Arlen Specter.

I want to give my thanks and the thanks of our Nation to one of the great labor leaders of our time, a man whose entire life has been devoted to working people, who brought new life to a movement, and who worked tirelessly on behalf of organized workers, and who will be stepping down tomorrow, your president, John Sweeney. John, I know that Maureen is looking forward to seeing a little more of you, and your granddaughter Kennedy is about to get a whole lot more spoiled by her grandpa. But we are so proud of the work that you've done and grateful for your lifetime of service.

I know it's bad luck to congratulate somebody before they're officially elected, but I'm going to go ahead and take my chances and congratulate the man who will pick up John's mantle, the son and grandson of Pennsylvania coal miners, a man who worked his way through college to lead the United Mine Workers, my friend, a fiery advocate for America's ideals, Rich Trumka. I also want to congratulate the officers coming in with Rich: Arlene, who will be continuing her service; and Liz, who will be making history as the first woman elected secretary-treasurer. I am looking forward to working with every single one of you.

Now, being here with all of you is a reminder of what we're trying to do in Washington and why I'm there in the first place, because one of the fundamental reasons I ran for President was to stand up for hard-working families, to ease the struggles, to lift the hopes, and make possible the dreams of middle class Americans.

Your stories are what drive me each and every day in the White House. Stories I read about in letters, or I hear about in town hall meetings, or somebody grabs me in a rope line and starts telling me something, stories I remember from the campaign trail. Stories like one told by Steve Skvara, a proud member of the United Steelworkers in Indiana. Steve spent 34 years at LTV Steel, until a car accident left him with a disability and forced him to retire. When the company went broke a couple years later, Steve lost his pension, and his family lost their health care.

So rising to ask a question at the CFL—the AFL–CIO debate during the campaign, Steve said—and I'm quoting him now—"Every day of my life, I sit at the kitchen table across from the woman who devoted 36 years of her life to my family, and I can't afford to pay for her health care." And as he said it, he got choked up, and his voice started to crack.

Brothers and sisters, this isn't just about Steve; this is about all of us. Because when hard-working Americans like Steve succeed, that's when organized labor succeeds. And when organized labor succeeds, that's when our middle class succeeds. And when our middle class succeeds, that's when the United States of America succeeds. That's what we're fighting for.

For over half a century, the success of America has been built on the success of our middle class. It was the creation of the middle class that lifted this Nation up in the wake of a great depression. It was the expansion of the middle class that opened the doors of opportunity to millions more. It was a strong middle class that powered American industries and propelled America's economy and made the 20th century the American century.

And the fundamental test of this century, of our time, is whether we will heed this lesson: whether we will let America become a nation of the very rich and the very poor, of the haves and the have-nots, or whether we will remain true to the promise of this country and build a future where the success of all of us is built on the success of each of us.

That's the future I want to build. That's the future the AFL–CIO wants to build. That's the future the American people want to build. That's the future that I've been working to build from the moment I took office.

Now, we've been hearing a lot of stuff from folks who aren't that friendly to me—[*laughter*]—or the union movement. So let's just take a stroll down memory lane. [*Laughter*] See, so let's just remember where we were when I took the oath of office a little over 8 months ago.

At the time, folks were fearing the complete collapse of our entire financial system. Our economy was shedding about 700,000 jobs a month. Our credit markets were frozen; folks couldn't get a home loan, they couldn't get a car loan, they couldn't get a student loan if they needed it. What was a deep recession threatened to become a great depression. You remember that, right?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Okay. That's why we acted boldly and swiftly to pass an unprecedented economic Recovery Act. A plan that didn't include any of the usual Washington earmarks or porkbarrel spending, but what it did include was a guarantee to uphold Davis-Bacon and pay prevailing wage.

Because of the Recovery Act, we're keeping a promise I made to give all of you—95 percent of working Americans—a tax cut, a tax cut that will benefit nearly 5 million families in Pennsylvania. We increased and extended unemployment insurance to 12 million Americans, including hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians. We made sure that they could get health insurance if they were looking for a job, because COBRA was too expensive, reduced the cost of it by 65 percent. So a lot of families out there were able to hang onto their health care even during the downturn.

We're putting Americans to work across this country rebuilding crumbling roads and bridges and waterways with the largest investment in our infrastructure since Eisenhower created the Interstate Highway System in the 1950s. All in all, many middle class families will see their incomes go up by about $3,000 because of the Recovery Act, helping them get back much of what they've lost due to this recession.

So I know times are still tough for working people. I know too many people are still looking

for work or worried they'll be the next ones let go. But the Recovery Act is making a difference. We've stopped our economic freefall. That's something everybody can agree on.

But here's the problem: Even before this last financial crisis, the economy had problems. Just last week, a census report came out showing that in 2008, before the downturn, family income fell to its lowest point in over a decade, and more families slid into poverty. Folks at the top 1 percent did pretty good. Everybody else saw their wages and incomes flatten. That's unacceptable. And I refuse to let America go back to the culture of irresponsibility and greed that made it possible, back to an economy with soaring CEO salaries and shrinking middle class incomes, back to the days when banks made reckless decisions that hurt Wall Street and Main Street alike. We're not going to go back to those days. It'd be bad for unions, bad for the middle class, and bad for the United States of America. We're not turning back; we're moving forward.

We're not turning back; we're moving forward. And that's why we need to build a new foundation for lasting prosperity by creating the jobs of the future, by reforming our health care system, by laying down tough rules of the road to protect consumers from abuse, let the markets function fairly and freely, and ensure that we never experience another crisis like this again. That's how we'll build an economy that works for working Americans. That's how we'll help our children climb higher than we did. That's how we'll grow our great American middle class.

Audience member. I love you!

The President. I love you too, sister. [*Laughter*] We'll—although, it sounds like you've been hollering too much; your throat was all—[*laughter*].

We're going to grow our middle class with policies that benefit you, the American worker. And as John Sweeney noted, I've set up a Middle Class Task Force to do just that, run by my outstanding Vice President, that scrappy kid from Scranton, Pennsylvania, Joe Biden.

We'll grow our middle class by building a stronger labor movement. That's why I named Hilda Solis, daughter of a union member, as our new Labor Secretary. Hilda and I know that whether we're in economic times—good economic times or bad economic times, labor is not the problem, labor is part of the solution.

That's why we've begun reversing and replacing old antilabor Executive orders and policies with ones that protect your benefits and protect your safety and protect your rights to organize and collectively bargain. That's why the very first bill I signed into law was the Lilly Ledbetter Act to uphold the basic principle of equal pay for equal work. That's why I stand behind the "Employee Free Choice Act," because if a majority of workers want a union, they should get a union.

We'll grow our middle class by creating jobs for Americans who want one, not just any jobs, but jobs with good wages and good benefits, jobs that give a person the satisfaction of knowing they'll meet their responsibilities to their families, jobs that aren't just a source of income, but a source of pride and self-respect. Every American deserves that much.

Earlier today I visited a GM plant in Youngstown, Ohio, that is—[*applause*]—Youngstown in the house. This plant is rehiring about a thousand workers to make the cars of tomorrow. That's a sign of life in our auto industry, and I'm pleased to see it. But you know what? I don't want to just see jobs returning to our auto industry; I want to see them being created across this country in every industry. That's why we're investing in a clean energy economy that will free America from the grip of foreign oil and create millions of new green jobs that can't be outsourced. That's why I've named a new point person to jump-start American manufacturing so that we can make "Made in America" not just a slogan, we want to make it a reality.

We'll grow our middle class by doing a better job educating our sons and daughters. It was the GI bill that helped strengthen the middle class in the 20th century, and our generation deserves the same kind of commitment. And that's why we've begun improving standards and holding ourselves more accountable and making college and advanced

training more affordable and offering students a complete and competitive education, from the cradle to the classroom, from college through a career. That's how we'll prepare every child in America, not just some children, but every child in America to outcompete any worker in the world.

And, yes, we'll grow our middle class by finally providing quality, affordable health insurance in this country. Health care can't wait. It can't wait. Few have fought for this cause harder, few have championed it longer than you, our brothers and sisters in organized labor. You're making phone calls, knocking on doors, showing up at rallies, because you know why this is so important. You know this isn't just about the millions of Americans who don't have health insurance; it's about the hundreds of millions more who do: Americans who worry that they'll lose their insurance if they lose their job, who fear their coverage will be denied because of a preexisting condition, who know that one accident or illness could mean financial ruin.

In fact, a new report from the Kaiser Family Foundation was released today showing that family premiums rose more than 130 percent over the last 10 years, three times faster than wages. They now average over $13,000 a year, the highest amount on record, which is why when you go in to negotiate, you can't even think about negotiating for a salary—a wage increase because the whole negotiation is about trying to keep the benefits you already have.

That's not just the fault of the employer; it's the fault of a broken health care system that's sucking up all the money. When are we going to stop it? When are we going to say enough is enough? How many more workers have to lose their coverage? How many more families have to go into the red for a sick loved one? How much longer are we going to have to wait? It can't wait.

Audience members. We can't wait! We can't wait! We can't wait!

The President. We can't wait. My friends, we have talked this issue to death, year after year, decade after decade. That's why I said last week before a joint session of Congress, I said, the time for bickering is over. The time for games has passed. Now is the time for action. Now is the time to deliver on health insurance reform.

The plan I announced will offer more security and more stability to Americans who have insurance. It will offer insurance to Americans who don't. And it will slow the growth of health care costs for our families, our businesses, and our Government.

If you already have health insurance through your job—and because many of you are members of unions, you do—nothing in this plan will require you or your employer to change your coverage or your doctor. Let me repeat: Nothing in this plan will require you to change your coverage or your doctor.

What this plan will do is make your insurance work better for you. It'll be against the law for insurance companies to deny you coverage because of a preexisting condition. It will be against the law for insurance companies to drop your coverage when you get sick or water it down when you need it the most. They won't be able to place some arbitrary cap on how much coverage you can receive in a given year or a given lifetime. We'll place a limit on how much you can be charged for out-of-pocket expenses, because in the United States of America, nobody should go broke just because they got sick.

Insurance companies will be required to cover, at no extra charge, routine checkups and preventive care, like mammograms and colonoscopies, because there's no reason we shouldn't be catching diseases like breast cancer or colon cancer before they get worse. It makes sense, it saves money, and it will save lives.

So that's what we're offering to people who already have health insurance: more stability and security. For the tens of millions of Americans who don't have health insurance, the second part of this plan will finally offer them—offer you—affordable choices. We'll do this with a new insurance exchange, a marketplace where individuals and small businesses, they can shop for affordable health insurance plans that work for them.

And because there will be one big group, these uninsured Americans, they have leverage, and they can drive down the cost of care and get a better deal than they're getting right now.

That's how large companies and Government employees get affordable insurance. It's how everybody in Congress—including those who are always critical of Government—get their insurance. It's time to give every opportunity to Americans that Members of Congress give to themselves.

I've also said that one of the options in this exchange should be a public option. Now let me be clear. Let me be clear, because there's been a lot of misinformation out here about this. This would just be an option. Nobody would be forced to choose it. No one with insurance would be affected. But what it would do is offer Americans more choices and promote real competition and put pressure on private insurers to make their policies affordable and treat their customers better.

Now, when you're talking with some of your friends and neighbors, they might say, "Well, that all sounds pretty good, but how are you going to pay for it?" And that's a legitimate question, because I inherited the $1.3 trillion deficit when I came into office. That's the other thing people have been a little selective about; they don't seem to remember how we got into this mess. [*Laughter*] But it's a legitimate question: How are we going to dig ourselves out of this big financial hole we're in? So let me try and answer it.

The plan I'm proposing is going to cost $900 billion over 10 years. That's real money, although, that's less than we've spent on Iraq and Afghanistan wars. It's less than the tax cuts for the wealthiest few Americans that Congress passed during the previous administration—wars and tax cuts that were not paid for and ballooned our deficits to record levels and didn't help America's working families. We won't make that mistake again. We will not pay for health insurance reform by adding to our deficits. I will not sign a bill that adds a dime to our deficits, either now or in the future.

What we will do is pay for it by eliminating hundreds of billions of dollars in fraud and waste and abuse, including billions of dollars in subsidies for insurance companies that pad their profits but aren't improving care. We'll also set up a commission of doctors and medical experts to encourage the adoption of commonsense, best practices that can further reduce costs and raise quality in the years ahead. That's how we'll pay for most of this plan, by using money that's already being spent in the health care system, but spent badly.

So don't pay attention to those scary stories about how Medicare benefits will be cut. That will never happen on my watch. We will protect Medicare, so it's a safety net for our seniors that they can count on today, tomorrow, forever. Not a dollar from the Medicare Trust Fund will be used to pay for this plan, not a single dollar.

These are the reforms I'm proposing. These are the reforms labor has been championing. These are the reforms the American people need. These are the reforms I intend to sign into law: quality, affordable health insurance; a world-class education; good jobs that pay well and can't be outsourced; a strong labor movement. That's how we'll lift up hard-working families. That's how we'll grow our middle class. That's how we'll put opportunity within reach in the United States of America.

Now, the battle for opportunity has always been fought in places like Pittsburgh, places like Pennsylvania. It was here that Pittsburgh rail workers rose up in a great strike. It was here that Homestead steelworkers took on Pinkerton guards at Carnegie mills. It was here that something happened in a town called Aliquippa.

It was a tough place for workers in the 1930s, "a benevolent dictatorship," said the local steel boss. Labor had no rights. The foreman's whim ruled the day. And the company hired workers from different lands and different races—the better to keep them divided, it was thought at the time.

But despite threats and harassment, despite seeing organizers fired and driven out of town, these steelworkers came together—Serb and Croat, Italian and Pole, and Irish and Greek, and kin of Alabama slaves and son of Pennsylvania coal miners—and they took their case all the way to the Supreme Court, securing the right to organize up and down the Ohio River Valley and all across America.

And I know that if America can come together like Aliquippa and rise above barriers

of faith and race and region and party, then we will not only make life better for steelworkers like Steve in Indiana, not only make life better for members of the AFL–CIO, but will make possible the dreams of middle class families and make real the promise of the United States of America for everybody. That's what we're fighting for. That's what this White House is committed to. That's what the AFL–CIO is committed to. And arm in arm, we are going to get this done.

I got a question for you: Are you fired up?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Are you ready to go?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Are you fired up?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Are you ready to go?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Let's go get this done. Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:23 p.m. at David L. Lawrence Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Richard L. Trumka, secretary-treasurer, and Arlene Holt Baker, executive vice president, AFL–CIO; Elizabeth Bunn, secretary-treasurer, United Auto Workers; and Treasury Department Senior Adviser for Auto Issues Ron Bloom, in his capacity as Senior Counselor to the President for Manufacturing Policy.

Remarks at a Fundraiser for Senator Arlen Specter in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

September 15, 2009

The President. Hello, Philadelphia! It is good to be back in Philly with a man who's always put his State before politics, before party, your Senator, Arlen Specter.

We've got a number of other luminaries here today, starting with the great Governor and sports fan—[*laughter*]—here in Pennsylvania, Ed Rendell is in the house; the outstanding young mayor of the city of Philadelphia, Michael Nutter, is here. Not here, but I want to give him a shout-out anyway because we're in his district, Congressman Bob Brady, doing great work for us. Senator Bob Casey is on the way and will be here soon, and we love Bob Casey. T.J. Rooney, chairman of the Democratic State party, is here. And I want to acknowledge a special friend, somebody who is a great supporter of mine and is the chairman of this event, David Cohen is in the house. Please give him a round of applause.

Now, I want to say a few things about Arlen Specter. Arlen's not someone who came to Washington to fight for a particular ideology. He came to fight for the working men and women of Pennsylvania. And he has a long and successful record of doing just that. This is a man who has voted to raise the minimum wage 20 times, because he understands if you work in this society, you shouldn't be in poverty. This is a man who's fought for workplace safety and mine safety, who stood up for the American steelworker and American manufacturer, who has voted to extend unemployment benefits time and time again.

I'll never forget that in the height of this recession, when we had just been sworn in—you remember? There's some selective memory going on out there. [*Laughter*] But you remember what it was like. We thought we might be tipping into a great depression, losing 700 [700,000]* jobs per month; financial system on the verge of collapse. We had to act boldly; we had to act swiftly. And Arlen Specter cast the deciding vote in favor of a Recovery Act that has helped pull us back from the brink, a Recovery Act that's already making a difference in the lives of millions of Pennsylvanians.

Since the Recovery Act was signed, nearly 5 million Pennsylvanians are seeing a tax cut in their paycheck. Think about that, 5 million people getting tax cuts, as I promised during the campaign. We provided relief to 2.5 million

* White House correction.

seniors and veterans and other struggling Americans. This puts money in their pockets. That means they're spending it in small businesses and circulating it within the economy.

We've extended unemployment benefits for over 800,000 Pennsylvanians who've borne the brunt of this recession. We've approved over 700 loans to small businesses throughout Pennsylvania.

You talk to your Governor, Ed Rendell, about the kinds of drastic cuts and layoffs that would have had to occur had it not been for the Recovery Act; tens of thousands of State workers potentially laid off.

At the time, this was not an easy vote for Arlen to take. You can imagine the pressure he was under from the other side. But Arlen knew that it was more important to answer to the people who sent him to Washington than to the party he belonged to. And that's why you should send him back to Washington for six more years, because you know he's going to fight for you regardless of what the politics are.

For the same reason that Arlen has been fighting so hard for health insurance reform, for him, this is not an issue of politics or party, this is personal. This is a man who has seen the health care system up close, the good and the bad. This is a man who courageously battled cancer and is here today because he was able to receive some of the best health care available in the world, and also because he's a tough son of a gun. [*Laughter*] And he knows that. And he believes that every American should be able to get that kind of care, no matter who you are or how much money you have. That's why he's spent the summer holding town hall meetings across the State. That's why he hasn't been afraid to take some criticism and some hard questions and occasionally some—well—[*laughter*]—he knows how important it is to pass health care reform this year.

It has now been nearly a century since Teddy Roosevelt first called for health care reform. It's been attempted by nearly every President and every Congress ever since. And our failure to get it done year after year, decade after decade, has placed a burden on families, on businesses, and on taxpayers that we can no longer sustain.

We know what will happen if we don't do anything, if we fail again. If we do nothing, premiums will continue to rise faster than your wages. If we do nothing, more businesses will close down; fewer will open in the first place. If you have health insurance, you are going to see more and more of those costs taken out of your paycheck. And eventually, some of your employers are going to decide, we just can't afford to bear the burden.

If we do nothing, we will eventually spend more on Medicare and Medicaid than every other Government program combined. We would end up having to use all the money that we currently spend on student loans or national parks or Department of Homeland Security—all of that would be consumed by Medicare and Medicaid if we don't make a change in the system. That is not an option for the United States of America. Arlen Specter understands it's not an option. That's why he's fighting alongside me to get this thing done. Because as I said last week, I may not be the first President to take up the cause of health care reform, but I'm determined to be the last.

The plan we've put forward will offer security to those Americans with health insurance. It will offer health insurance that's affordable to those who don't have it right now. And it will bring down the cost of health care for families and businesses and taxpayers.

If you're among the hundreds of millions of Americans who already have health insurance through the job or Medicare or Medicaid or the VA, nothing in this plan will require you or your employer to change your coverage or drop the doctor that you have. But what it will do is it will make sure that even if you lose your job, you can still go get health insurance, even if you have a preexisting condition.

Audience member. Yeah!

The President. We'll—this young lady knows all about that. It will make sure that your out-of-pocket costs are capped, that you are not—meaning, on the other hand, a lifetime cap, where at a certain point an insurance company just says, "You know what? We can't

pay anymore." It will make insurance work better for you. That's if you have health insurance.

Now, if you don't have health insurance, you're going to be able to buy into an exchange with millions of other Americans, which means you have leverage and you can now get the same kind of better deal that people who work for the biggest companies, or work for the Federal Government, or, by the way, our Members of Congress are able to get for themselves. That's a deal that all Americans should be able to enjoy.

Audience member. Particularly Joe Wilson! [*Laughter*]

The President. Now, everybody knows we have to change the system. But people have a legitimate question, and that is, how are we going to pay for all this? Arlen is fiscally conservative. He doesn't want us—see us wasting taxpayer dollars. Neither do I. We can't afford it, especially when we inherited a $1.3 trillion deficit, in part because the war in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan and the prescription drug plan and tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans were not paid for. I'm not going to make that same mistake when it comes to health care. Arlen Specter will make sure we don't make that same mistake.

And that's why what we've said is, let's use the money that's being wasted in the system right now—subsidies to insurance companies that are already making a profit, tens of billions of dollars in waste and abuse—the majority of this health care plan can be paid for with money that's already in the system but just not used wisely, not making people healthier.

And I want to say to all the senior citizens out there, don't let these folks scare you about Medicare. Nobody has been more of a champion of Medicare than me and the Democratic Party. We are going to keep on doing it. Not a dollar is going to come out of the Medicare trust fund. Don't believe these stories. We want to make Medicare stronger and close that doughnut hole in the Medicare system that is causing seniors to have to shell out thousands of dollars for their prescription drug costs.

We're going to get this done. This is going to be a priority because one of the things that Arlen Specter came to Washington to do is to solve problems. He and I, even when we were on the opposite side of the aisle, understood that the American people aren't looking for slogans, they're not looking for ideology, they're not looking for bickering. They're looking for the solutions that can help build a foundation for long-term economic growth and security for the American middle class. That's what they're looking for. That's what we're fighting for.

But we can't do it without you. There is a lot of noise out there. There's a lot of misinformation out there, not just on health care. We also need to have a clean energy economy that can produce good jobs that can't be outsourced. We've got to have the school system that works for every American and every young person here in Philadelphia.

Those are all parts—part of a foundation for long-term economic growth. And it's not going to happen unless the American people mobilize and say to themselves, "Now is the time. We're going to stop putting off the tough problems."

I understand that the American people are feeling anxious and we're going through a recession right now, and people are wondering, can this be the "American century" the way the 20th century was the "American century"? I know that there are doubts that creep into people's minds. I know that there's a tendency during tough times for us to turn on each other instead of come together. But the one thing that American history shows us is that each and every time that we confront major challenges, each—every time where we come to that fork in the road where we can keep on doing the same thing and going into slow decline, or we can go through some transformation and make some changes even when they're hard, we always take the harder, better road.

We do it not only for ourselves; we do it for our children, we do it for our grandchildren. We know that the central idea in America is, we don't have to stand pat; we are going to make sure that the next generation has it better off than we do. We're going to build a stronger America, a more prosperous America, a more secure America.

That's why Arlen got into politics so many years ago. That's why he was a prosecutor. That's why he has excelled in the United States

Senate. That's why he is—he was a great Senator when he was a Republican; he's going to be a even better Senator now that he's a Democrat. And that's why you are all going to work just as hard as you can to make sure that he gets reelected and is continuing to help me move this country forward.

Thank you very much, Philadelphia. I love you, and I love Arlen Specter. I appreciate you guys. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:08 p.m. at the Pennsylvania Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to David L. Cohen, executive vice president, Comcast Corporation.

Remarks at a Reception for Senator Arlen Specter in Philadelphia
September 15, 2009

Thank you so much, everybody. Please have a seat. Thank you. It was, first of all, wonderful to meet all of you as we were taking pictures. And I want to say that I am so pleased to be here not only because of Arlen's outstanding track record, but because, like me, he married up in life. [*Laughter*] We are both lawyers. We both appreciate the Constitution. We're both fighters, and sometimes people count us out. So although we come from different parts of the country, we have this bond, this thread. And as Arlen, I think, has mentioned, one of the most important bonds is, we're basically a couple of Kansas kids who somehow got displaced—[*laughter*]—him in Philadelphia and me in Honolulu.

I want to make sure that I give a word of thanks to Bob Casey, who is one of the finest people I know, has just been a great friend to me—and his entire family obviously is just legendary here in Pennsylvania. So please give Bob Casey a big round of applause. And I want to thank David Cohen for being such a great supporter of mine, a great supporter of Arlen's. And I suspect that David is in the middle of just about every civic activity that takes place in Philadelphia, and he does it with just a lot of class and always a smile on his face. So thank you, David, for all your help.

You know, if you'd think back to where we were 8 months ago, it's hard to imagine. When I was sworn into office, we were in the midst of the worst recession since the Great Depression. And a lot of economists—both left and right—thought that we might be plunging into a great depression. We were shedding 700,000 jobs a month. Credit was almost entirely frozen. Not only could you not get a bank loan or a student loan or a home loan, but banks weren't lending money to each other.

And at that point, I think there was a sense that in the absence of effective Government action, we could end up being in a real disaster. And so we determined that we had to move boldly and swiftly to turn this around. And we put together—after consulting with the best economists in the country from all walks of life and all parties, we decided that we needed to put together a recovery package that would have a variety of elements. It would provide tax cuts to businesses and individuals. It would provide support for States that were seeing their budgets plummet. It would provide help to individuals who were being laid off. And it would start building the kind of infrastructure that would move America into the 21st century.

And there's been a little bit of a selective memory about—a little historical revisionism—about the situation that we were in. But even then, even as scared as people were, there were some in Washington who decided that this is a political opportunity, this is ideological, that we should fight this and perpetuate the kind of gridlock that has caused us so many problems in the past.

I'm pleased that I had a partner in Arlen Specter in getting that recovery package done, because it displayed all the traits that I think makes him such an exceptional Senator. Obviously, the first, independence; he is somebody who has always fought for the people who sent him to Washington and not just party; a terrific intellect, being able to follow all the arguments about how to structure a plan that had the best chance of being effective; toughness,

being able to put up with a awful lot of grief in the midst of what was a eventually pretty acrimonious debate; and integrity, willingness to stand for what he believed in.

Because of Arlen, we were able to get that recovery package passed. Because the recovery package passed, we are now seeing that this economy has pulled itself back from the brink. The financial markets are working again. The stock market has recovered a lot of its value, which means people's 401(k)s have recovered a lot of their value. Banks aren't lending as much as we'd like, but at least things are functioning. We saw this month, for the first time in 3 years, manufacturing actually ticking up, consumer confidence is up. We are not out of the woods, but we've pulled back from the abyss.

Now, the challenge for us is figuring out how do we create an economy that doesn't go through these wild boom and bust cycles. How can we create sustained growth? How can we make sure that we've laid the foundations for a competitive America in the 21st century, just like the foundation was laid for the "American Century," the 20th century?

And in that process, there are going to be some critical decisions that we're going to have to make. Are we willing to invest in the education of our young people so that we can develop the science and engineering and technology and mathematical skills that keep us at the cutting edge? We're not going to get that for free. It's not just going to be a matter of money; it's also going to be a matter of reform. But we've got to have a sense of urgency about how we pick up the pace in our schools. We're going to have to have an entirely new approach to energy, not just because of climate change and the environment, not just because of our addiction to foreign oil that ends up having us send billions of dollars overseas, but also because it is putting us at a huge competitive disadvantage.

We're going to have to fix our health care system. We're in the midst of a major debate about health care. And if you are a liberal, then you're concerned about making sure that 30 million American citizens get coverage. If you're moderate and not all that interested in politics, you should still be concerned about the fact that your health care is less secure and less stable than it has ever been. And if you're a conservative, then you should know that the only thing that is going to allow us to close the structural deficit that we have that is piling on debt for our children and our grandchildren is if we are able to bend the cost curve and reduce the cost of health care inflation over the next 20, 30 years. If we don't do that, there's no way for us to balance our budget. There's so much at stake in fixing our health care system.

Now, this is before we start getting into foreign policy and the decisions we're going to have to make in terms of how we project our power effectively. How do we balance diplomacy and our military might in an intelligent way so that we're serving the national security interests of the American people? How do we make sure that we preserve our civil liberties even in the midst of going aggressively after those who would try to do us harm? How do we affirm our constitutional values at a time when the country is becoming more diverse? That can lead to incredible dynamism. That's always been a source of strength for America, but it can also lead to contentiousness and conflict and strife.

On each and every one of these questions, the Presidency can only take you so far. I've got a clear sense of where we need to go, and I'm absolutely convinced that if we make the right decisions right now and we battle through some difficult choices and we're willing to make some sacrifices, that we are going to be able to lay that foundation for the next generation.

But the President can't do it alone. Every single issue that I just mentioned, I've got to have effective, tough partners with integrity and vision, who feel accountable not to special interests in Washington but feel accountable to the folks who sent him there. That's the kind of Senator you've got in Bob Casey. That's the kind of Senator that you have had for many years and you need to continue to have in Arlen Specter.

And that's why I'm here today. I'm here today because I'm going to need all of you to redouble your efforts in the months to come to fight for Arlen, because he's fighting for you, and he's fighting for what's right. And it's not going to be easy. It's not easy because we live in a polarized environment, and politics has

become sport, and it's hard to sustain complex arguments about why we have to make choices that don't always seem real attractive on the surface. And so that creates political vulnerabilities for all of us. And all of you who know better, who know why it's so important for us to make these tough decisions, you've got to make sure that you support somebody who's got the savvy and the intelligence and the tenacity to actually get things done.

That's who Arlen Specter is. I'm proud to call him a friend. I am glad that he is in the Senate. And I'm going to keep on needing him in the Senate in the years to come. So I hope that all of you work as hard as you can. If you do, then I'm absolutely confident that we're going to get through these tough times and brighter days are going to be ahead not just for Pennsylvania, but for the United States of America.

So thank you so much for being here, everybody. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:26 p.m. at the Pennsylvania Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to David L. Cohen, executive vice president, Comcast Corp.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada and an Exchange With Reporters
September 16, 2009

President Obama. Hello, everybody. Prime Minister Harper and I have just had an excellent conversation, reiterating the extraordinary friendship and bond between the American and the Canadian people. We discussed both our bilateral relationship on issues of energy, our borders, issues of trade, and how we can continue to strengthen the already excellent relations that we have.

We also have discussed a range of international issues. Obviously, we've been partnering with Canada on improving the global economy. We both agree that although we are not out of the woods yet, that we have seen signs of stability and that both Canada and the United States are on the path to positive economic growth. We both agree that coordination still needs to continue at the international level and are looking forward to the G–20, where we can both discuss how to sustain efforts to kick-start the economy, but also make sure that we're starting to look at exit strategies and what a sustainable growth model would be long term.

We had discussions about some of the international threats that continue to exist out there. We discussed climate change and preparations for the Copenhagen conference, Afghanistan and the need for us to move forward in a clear direction over the next several years, and the situation with Iran and the potential development of weapons and how we respond to the potential development of nuclear weapons in Iran.

So overall, I just want to again publicly thank Prime Minister Harper for being an outstanding partner to the United States. We appreciate his excellent work. We very much appreciate the Canadian people. And we are looking forward to seeing them next week in both the United Nations context and the G–20.

Prime Minister Harper. Well, thank you very much, Mr. President. First of all, Barack, let me just say I really appreciate—this is our seventh time, I think, in some form or another we've had a chance to discuss some of these issues, and we appreciate your time and, of course, both your and your country's alliance, neighborliness, and friendship. It's our most important relationship in the world. We're always delighted to sit down and talk.

[*At this point, Prime Minister Harper spoke in French, and no translation was provided.*]

Once again, we discussed three major subjects, as I indicated we would yesterday. First of all, the economy, the recovery is happening, but it is fragile, and we really must redouble our efforts to apply stimulus measures, get

those out the door, as we're doing in Canada, to make sure we continue to fix internationally the problems of financial institutions. And I noted the President's speech this week in Wall Street in this regard, which I think was an important message for everyone.

We're planning for the G–20; we're looking forward to that. I think that's well in hand. I think we're going to have very useful and productive meetings there. And we discussed some of these irritants that arise in our trade relationship. Particularly, I do want to mention this question of the charter flights, the NHL charter flights, which has been a difficulty in recent months. We think we're very close to resolving that in the next very little while. I think we have some kind of a tentative agreement in principle, and we're working to finalize that in the next few days.

We discussed energy security and climate change. I remind all our American friends that Canada is by far the largest supplier of energy to the United States. And we are determined to be a continental partner in dealing with the joint—with the very linked problems of climate change and energy security. Our two Ministers, our respective Ministers have provided us with a report on the clean energy dialogue, which I think shows some great progress in identifying areas of joint action. I think the next step will be some specific projects that we can pursue.

Today Canada is announcing a major hydroelectric project, a big transmission line in northwestern British Columbia, which has the capacity down the road to be part of a more integrated North American hydroelectric system that will be, obviously, part of dealing with both these problems of energy security and climate change.

And finally, as I said, we would discuss international peace and security. And as the President mentioned, we discussed the great challenge the world has in Iran. But we also did discuss, of course, Afghanistan. We have a joint mission there, and we certainly have very much welcomed the renewed engagement of the United States in that country and always, particularly in our sector of the country. And of course, we always value joint cooperation with the United States on defense and security matters. And our two militaries and our civilian people are working tremendously in southern Afghanistan, and we look forward to some of that work continuing.

President Obama. Good. All right, Ben Feller [Associated Press].

Military Operations in Afghanistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to ask both of you: At this point, are U.S. and NATO forces winning the war in Afghanistan?

President Obama. You know, I think that what is clear is that we have lacked as clear of a strategy and a mission as is necessary in order to meet our overriding objective, which is to dismantle and disrupt and destroy Al Qaida and prevent it from being able to project violence against the United States, allies like Canada, our bases and operations around the world. So that has not yet occurred.

When I came in, I had to make a series of immediate decisions about sending additional troops to ensure that the election could take place during the fighting season. But I was crystal clear at the time that postelection, we were going to need to do an additional assessment. General McChrystal has carried out his own assessment on the military strategy, but it's important that we also do an assessment on the civilian side, the diplomatic side, the development side, that we analyze the results of the election and then make further decisions moving forward.

My determination is to get this right, and that means broad consultation not only inside the U.S. Government but also with our ISAF partners and our NATO allies. And I'm going to take a very deliberate process in making those decisions. And so I just want to be absolutely clear, because there's a lot—been a lot of discussion in the press about this, that there is no immediate decision pending on resources, because one of the things that I'm absolutely clear about is you have to get the strategy right and then make determinations about resources. You don't make determinations about resources, and certainly, you don't make determinations about sending young men and women into battle, without having absolute clarity about what the strategy is going to be. And so we are going

to proceed and make sure that we don't put the cart before the horse.

Prime Minister Harper. Just very quickly, I—to try and answer that question directly, I certainly don't think, notwithstanding the continued problems and the—in many parts of the country, the fierce efforts of the insurgency, I don't think the Taliban in any way constitutes an alternative government or any immediate threat to replacing the Government of Afghanistan. So I think in that sense, you know, we can see the progress that's been made. Obviously, though, we are concerned about the strength of the insurgency. We, as I say, welcome the renewed American effort and effort of some NATO countries.

Our emphasis in Canada for some time now, particularly since we extended our mission, has been really the necessity of seeing the Afghan Government accept and be able to handle greater responsibility for the day-to-day security of that country as we move forward.

Afghanistan is a very difficult country, I think. All of our militaries—Canadian, American, British, those who have been highly engaged—I think have done a tremendous job moving the ball forward. But in the end, we have to be clear that the security and sovereignty of Afghanistan can in the long term only be done by Afghans themselves. So I think whatever we do on both sides of the border and with our NATO partners has to have that as its long-term objective.

President Obama. Your——

Prime Minister Harper. Oh, I had. Was it—Eric. Yes.

Military Operations in Afghanistan/Trade

Q. Mr. President, Prime Minister, in contrast to that smart, brief question, I have a double-barreled question under the umbrella of security.

Canada and other NATO allies have set deadlines to leave Afghanistan. Mr. President, are you worried that the U.S. will be left to carry the burden in Afghanistan? What role would you like to see for Canada beyond 2011? Prime Minister, do you have any advice for the President, exit strategy or otherwise?

And then on economic security, Mr. President, despite assurances not to worry, U.S. protectionism is hurting Canadian businesses, according to Canadian businesses. And I just—we wonder if there is anything more you feel you can or that you should do about that.

And, Mr. Prime Minister, your views at this stage now that we've seen "Buy American" play itself out?

President Obama. Well, let me start with Afghanistan, and I'll just reiterate what I said earlier. We are in the process of making a strategy—a series of strategic decisions that will be sustainable, and we'll be doing so in close consultation with our allies and our partners.

We are tremendously grateful for the extraordinary sacrifices of the Canadian military. They have fought. They have had staying power. They have absorbed losses that we all grieve for.

And so I'm not worried about what will happen post-2011. I want to make sure that given the commitments that have already been made and that are continuing, that we make sure that the Canadian presence there fits into a coherent whole and that it's accomplishing our goals. And our goals are to eliminate Al Qaida as a threat, and, as Prime Minister Harper mentioned, I think it is important to recognize that ultimately Afghan security has to transition onto the shoulders of Afghan—the Afghan Government and Afghan security forces. And so the degree to which we are training them and building capacity, that's something that I'm certain will be part of any broad, long-term strategy, sustainable strategy.

On the economic front, the issue of "Buy American" in the stimulus package, I'm glad to hear that Canadians see this as—that the recovery package as being so significant. I've been trying to persuade the American public of precisely that fact, that we're actually creating jobs and putting people back to work.

The "Buy American" provisions that were there, as I noted at the time, we made sure that they were WTO compliant. That doesn't mean that they're not a source of irritation between the United States and Canada. Prime Minister Harper, I want to emphasize, has

brought this up with me every single time we've met, so he's been on the job on this issue. And our teams have been working together. It appears that there may be ways to deal with this bilaterally, but also potentially multilaterally.

The Provincial governments in Canada, my understanding is, are not signatories to the WTO government procurement agreements that would have preempted any of these "Buy America" agreements. That might be one solution. But in addition, we're pursuing, on a bilateral track, efforts to make sure that these sources of tension diminish.

But I do want to keep things in perspective. U.S.-Canadian trade continues to be robust. Canada continues to be a huge trading partner to the United States. Businesses in the United States and Canada both benefit from that trade, as do consumers. There is no prospect of any budding trade wars between our two countries. These are legitimate issues that have to be concerned—have to be raised, but I think it's important to understand that on the scale of our overall trading relationship, these aren't the—these shouldn't be considered the dominant element of our economic relationship.

Prime Minister Harper. Eric, first of all, on Afghanistan, I think it's important to rephrase your question, which is, Canada is not leaving Afghanistan; Canada will be transitioning from a predominantly military mission to a mission that will be a civilian humanitarian development mission after 2011. That transition is already in place.

As you know, Canada has had a very robust engagement for some time. We've actually, over the course of the last 3 or 4 years, as a consequence of that, increased our troop levels. I think you said—you heard what I said earlier, that what's essential is that whatever we in NATO and our U.N. allies are doing, that we make sure that eventually this country can stand on its own two feet, particularly on the security side, where they have their primary responsibility, so we can help more and more on the development and humanitarian side.

On "Buy America," we, obviously, had the discussions the President indicated. We have negotiators who are looking at a range of options. We talked about some of those today, and we'll be giving more detailed direction to them in terms of the kinds of options they should look at.

As you know, I agree with the President's assessment. We shouldn't lose the forest for the trees. These are important irritants; they are having some real impacts. But they are relatively small compared to the overall scale of Canadian-American trade. But I would emphasize that it is critical at a time where we're trying to see a recovery in the global economy, where forces of protectionism are a very significant threat, that we continue to demonstrate to the world that Canada and the United States can manage trade relations in a way that's extremely positive and a model for other countries.

[*Prime Minister Harper spoke in French, and no translation was provided.*]

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:49 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan. Prime Minister Harper referred to Minister of Natural Resources Lisa Raitt of Canada; and U.S. Secretary of Energy Steven Chu.

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada on Accelerating Economic Recovery and Job Creation
September 16, 2009

President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Stephen Harper today discussed common approaches to accelerating economic recovery, in North America and globally.

Unprecedented fiscal stimulus in both countries has helped to stabilize demand and avert deeper levels of economic contraction and job loss, but it is important to remain vigilant. They

agreed to work with other countries at the upcoming Pittsburgh Summit to lay the foundation for balanced and sustainable growth and to further the reform of financial regulations and international institutions to reflect the realities of the global economy.

The Leaders agreed that economic integration is a fundamental source of strength for both economies, that open trade and investment are essential for competitiveness and sustainable growth in North America and globally.

They expressed satisfaction with the productive ministerial dialogue put in place since the President's visit to Ottawa in February on promoting a secure and efficient border, to contribute equally to North American security and prosperity.

Progress on Clean Energy

The Prime Minister and the President reviewed progress to date on the U.S.-Canada Clean Energy Dialogue launched during President Obama's visit to Ottawa. They agreed that the report to leaders presented by ministers (see attached Annex) represents an important path forward for pursuing our shared objectives of environmental protection and secure energy supply in a balanced and effective manner.

With respect to climate change, they reaffirmed that given the high degree of integration between the Canadian and U.S. economies and energy markets, they should cooperate closely as they develop their respective approaches. They reiterated the urgency of taking aggressive action to combat climate change and reaffirmed their commitment towards a comprehensive and effective international agreement that puts the world on a clean energy pathway.

Cooperation on International Security Challenges

The Leaders reviewed developments on a number of shared foreign policy priorities, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Middle East Peace, and the Americas.

In particular, they reiterated their shared commitment to helping the Afghan government prevent Afghanistan from again becoming a base for terrorism and they restated U.S. and Canadian support for the peaceful restoration of democratic and constitutional order in Honduras and called on all parties to accept the San Jose Accord.

The Leaders agreed to work closely together in the coming months on the critical issue of nuclear security and non-proliferation, particularly in promoting concrete outcomes at the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington in April.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks at an Olympic, Paralympic, and Youth Sport Event
September 16, 2009

Thank you, everybody. Thank you. It is true that I always wanted to fence—[*laughter*]—and I thought that would be cool. So I might get a couple tips from you guys. [*Laughter*] Now you see one of the reasons that I love Chicago so much: It's the city where I met the woman I love.

Sixteen days away—we are just 16 days away from the deciding vote on which world city will host the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games, so let's get right down to business here. The United States is eager to welcome the world to our shores. This Nation would be honored to host the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games and to serve as host to thousands of athletes and millions of visitors from around the world. And within this great country of ours, there is no better city than thatm than Chicago, Illinois.

Now, I may live in Washington these days. I love Washington, DC. And our house here is a little bigger than the one we got in Chicago. [*Laughter*] But I've called Chicago home for nearly 25 years. It's a city of broad shoulders

and big hearts and bold dreams; a city of legendary sports figures, legendary sports venues, and legendary sports fans; a city like America itself, where the world—the world's races and religions and nationalities come together and reach for the dream that brought them here.

In Chicago, old and new exist in harmony. It's a city rooted in an industrial past that laid this Nation's railroads, forged this Nation's steel, rebuilt itself after a great fire, and reversed the course of a mighty river. And it's also a city of bustle and gleaming promise that Mayor Daley has pledged to make the greenest in America. And that's why I think that one of the most exciting parts of the Olympic and Paralympic Games is that all of the plans being made in Chicago exist within minutes of the city center, easily accessible to commerce and culture, parkland and water, because we don't want these venues to be far-flung, all over the place. We want to host these games where we live and work and play.

We want them in the heart of our proud city, the city that opened the way westward in the 19th century, that showed the way skyward in the 20th century, and that is leading the way forward in the 21st century. So Chicago is ready; the American people are ready. We want these games. We want them.

The Olympic and Paralympic Games, they hold a special place in our psyche. They lift us up; they bind us together. They're the sources of fleeting moments, instants, really, that have become permanently seared in our collective memories: the humble victory of Jesse Owens; the perfection of Nadia and Mary Lou; Michael Johnson's astonishment at his own feat; Derek Redmond and Kerri Strug bravely making it through with a little help; Jean Driscoll racing her wheelchair to gold after gold, be it over 100 meters or 26.2 miles. Moments of euphoria after years of hard work and moments when the human spirit triumphed over injury that should have been impossible to overcome, moments of a team's shared glory and moments of lonely disappointment despite one's best efforts, countless moments we live and relive again and again, silently and subconsciously, nodding yes, we do believe in miracles.

We find ourselves riveted by the games. Because even as we cheer, even as we live and die for each point or each tenth of a second, what we see reflected in the Olympic and Paralympic Games are simple truths of our common humanity, and that no matter who you are, where you're from, or what you look like, with hard work and dedication and discipline you can achieve your dreams. You can make it if you try.

What we see is that although we may come from vastly different stories and very different walks of life, we are one people who possess common values and common ideals, who celebrate individual excellence but also share a recognition that together, we can accomplish great and wonderful things we can't accomplish alone.

It's the stuff from which our young Nation was forged, and it is a set of timeless values that serves as the underpinnings of the Olympic spirit. And so the United States of America does more than just stand behind the Olympic and Paralympic Games; we stand behind their ideals.

Ands that's why we've created the first ever Office of Olympic, Paralympic, and Youth Sport right here in the White House. Now, this office does the work of coordinating with Federal Agencies to support and promote Olympic and Paralympic Games, but it also works to support and promote the Olympic spirit. We've been working hand in hand with Chicago 2016, the United States Olympic Committee, Olympians and Paralympians, some of whom have joined us here today, to get our young Americans active and involved in sports, because we want to do more than just bring the Olympic Games to America; we want them to create a lasting legacy here in America.

I want to thank the members of the International Olympic Committee for their dedication to the Olympic and Paralympic movement and the values it represents. I am confident that they'll find no greater partners than the city of Chicago and the American people to fuel this movement, to ignite it in new generations, and to inspire the world in 2016 with magnificent games that bring this world together in noble competition and shared celebration of our common humanity.

The energy, excitement, and enthusiasm on display at the White House here today, these aren't new. The folks gathered here this afternoon have had the Olympic spirit blazing within them for years, working tirelessly to bring these games to the city and the country we love. And I promise you, we are fired up about this.

I would make the case in Copenhagen personally, if I weren't so firmly committed to making real the promise of quality, affordable health care for every American. But the good news is I'm sending a more compelling superstar to represent the city and country we love, and that is our First Lady, Michelle Obama. She's going because she and I share the conviction that bringing the games to the United States isn't just important for the city, but for the American people. And I'm confident she and my senior adviser and director of the White House Office of Olympic, Paralympic, and Youth Sport, Valerie Jarrett, will represent the American people well.

Our Nation, from the local to the national level, is committed to the success of these games. The Chicago City Council unanimously supports this bid; both Houses of the United States Congress support this bid; I support this bid. And on behalf of the nearly 20,000 volunteers, the more than 1 million who've already signed up for—in support, and all who've already taken up this cause and made it their own, first as the cause of the city, and now the cause of a nation, the United States supports this bid.

Americans, like Chicagoans, we don't like to make small plans. We want to dream big and reach high. We hope deeply. We want these games. And if you choose Chicago, I promise you this: Chicago will make America proud, and America will make the world proud.

So, as I said when we first were announcing this bid in Chicago, let the games begin right here in the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:11 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago, IL; former Olympic athletes Nadia E. Comaneci, Mary Lou Retton, Michael D. Johnson, Derek A. Redmond, and Kerri A. Strug; and former Paralympic athlete Jean Driscoll. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks at the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute Annual Award Gala
September 16, 2009

Thank you so much. What an extraordinary honor to be here tonight. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you so much. Let me begin by thanking all of you for supporting this wonderful organization. I want to say how much I appreciate my former colleague and great friend Senator Bob Menendez and all the members of the Hispanic Caucus for their outstanding work.

I want to thank the chairwoman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, Nydia Velazquez, for her extraordinary dedication and leadership. Our great Speaker, who has been a partner in every single tough fight that we have had so far, and none of them have been easy, but she is helping to move this country forward, Nancy Pelosi. To all the House leadership, I'm grateful to you; to a couple of people who I stole from the Congressional Hispanic Caucus—they were just too good to leave alone—my great Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis, and my outstanding Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar.

I want to acknowledge the presence of Her Royal Highness Infanta Cristina of Spain, who is here. And our own royalty, somebody who we have become so extraordinarily proud of, somebody who I've just come to adore and who is going to make us proud for many, many years to come because she is not term limited, the newest Justice of the Supreme Court, Sonia Sotomayor. [*Applause*] Thank you.

Well, Michelle and I are so pleased to be here among such good friends. I want to congratulate Marc Anthony, not only because it's his birthday, but also because he's being

honored tonight as an artist who has shared not only his music but his heritage with all of us. And I'm sure it has nothing to do with the fact that Nydia has a crush on you—[*laughter*]—that you were provided this award. She's not alone—I'm telling you, J. Lo., watch out. [*Laughter*]

I'm also pleased to have the opportunity to be here as you mark the start of Hispanic Heritage Month. I want you to know that my administration is marking this occasion as well. Later this week, Secretary Salazar will lead the first meeting of a commission to look at the creation of a national museum to honor the historic contributions of Latinos and Latinas in our country.

Everybody here understands how important those contributions have been and will be. For more than 30 years, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute has, through scholarships and fellowships and internships, sought to lift up the next generation of Latino leaders. I came here 1 year ago as a candidate and said this was a goal I shared. And today I am here as a President to say that this is a goal my administration is helping to meet.

Now, you don't have to take my word for it. You can ask Ken or Hilda or any of the many young Latinos and Latinas, including four from CHCI Fellows, who work tirelessly in the White House and throughout my administration every single day. I mean, I don't mean to brag, but the number of Latinos and Latinas I've nominated to senior positions at this point exceeds that of any administration in history, and we are not finished yet. Nearly half of those appointments, by the way, are Latinas. And every wasn't—every single one of them wasn't just the best Latino for the job, but the best person for the job.

And obviously, one of my proudest moments as President—in fact, probably the proudest moment as President that I've had—was the day that Justice Sotomayor formally ascended to our Nation's highest court. We stood where generations of Justices had served, in that ornate chamber, and as she lifted her right hand to take the oath, our Nation took one step closer to fully realizing the founding ideals that the Court itself was established to defend. And across America, millions of children's sights are now set higher. Their dreams are a little bigger. That benefits all of us.

Now, we face enormous challenges as a nation. And many of those challenges are felt far more acutely by Latinos. But our ability to solve any of the problems we face, from health care to education, from economic recovery to immigration reform, depends on our willingness to recognize that our destiny is shared. We've seen this starkly throughout this economic crisis, as fortunes linked small-business owners on Main Street to the bond trader on Wall Street, the young family looking to refinance a mortgage to the large bank whose profits depend on their staying out of foreclosure. But this has always been true, in good times and bad. Our success has long depended on our willingness to see our challenges as ones we have to face together, our willingness to live up to a simple ideal: *Todos somos Americanos*—we are all Americans.

Because when there's a young Latina stuck in a crumbling school who starts to actually believe she's worth less because she doesn't have more, that isn't just a problem for that child. That isn't just a problem for the Hispanic community. That's a problem for our Nation. That's why I've challenged States to raise the bar across their early education programs, so that more of our children enter kindergarten ready to learn. That's why I've called for a new race to the top to reform America's schools and provide students with the knowledge and the skills they need for the 21st century. That's why we will address the dropout crisis that plagues far too many communities and commit to increasing access to college and success at college, so that America can once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. That depends in part on making sure that Latinos and Latinas have access to higher education, and that's a commitment of our administration.

We'll provide a complete and competitive education for every student, because our prosperity as a nation requires that we harness the talents of all our people, not just some. *Todos somos Americanos*.

When the unemployment rate for Latinos and Latinas is higher than 10 percent, it isn't just a problem for families worried about paying the bills or keeping their home. This is not just a

problem for the Hispanic community. It's a problem for our Nation. And that's why the Recovery Act is providing a tax cut for working families and extended unemployment and health insurance for folks who have lost their jobs. That's why we are not only seeking to revive this economy but to rebuild it stronger than before, by investing in clean energy jobs of tomorrow, by preparing our children to outcompete workers around the world, and by giving every American the security and stability of quality, affordable health insurance. *Todos somos Americanos*.

You know how important it is to pass health insurance reform. You know that Hispanics are more likely to be uninsured and Hispanic small-business owners, like all small-business owners, are struggling with higher health care costs than large companies, costs that are rising all the time. So I'm grateful to so many of you for the support that you've shown from the beginning of this effort. But the problems in our health care system aren't just a Hispanic American problem; they're an American problem.

That's why we'll offer tax credits to individuals to help them afford coverage and to small-business owners to help them provide coverage for their workers. That's why we'll provide greater security and stability to those who already have insurance. Because no one in America should have to worry that their coverage will be dropped the moment they need it the most. No one in America should be denied health insurance because of a preexisting condition. No one in America should go broke because they got sick. That's a basic principle that we seek to uphold.

Now, as you know, there's been a little controversy about who exactly will be covered under reform, and I want to be clear: If someone's here illegally, they won't be covered under this plan. That's a commitment I've made. But I also want to make this clear: Even though I do not believe we can extend coverage to those who are here illegally, I also don't simply believe we can ignore the fact that our immigration system is broken. That's why I strongly support making sure folks who are here legally have access to affordable, quality health insurance under this plan, just like everybody else. And we certainly should not let this debate on health care, one that's so essential to Hispanic Americans and all Americans, get sidetracked by those looking to exploit divisions and kill reform at any cost. That's what they always try to do.

If anything, this debate underscores the necessity of passing comprehensive immigration reform and resolving the issue of 12 million undocumented people living and working in this country, once and for all. That's what I've said from the start. That's what I say tonight.

I've asked Secretary Janet Napolitano to lead the conversation with stakeholders both on and off Capitol Hill. And I know that she's met with many of you. This is a tough issue—we all know that—which is why it's so important that we develop the strategy and the policy that's going to get us over the finish line. My commitment is real, and so is my desire to get this done. In fact, the changes we've made administratively are already making a difference. The American people did not send us to Washington to ignore problems just because they're tough. They sent us here to solve them, and that's what we can and must do on immigration reform.

On all these issues, you understand what's at stake because you see it; you experience it in your communities every single day. Whether it's health insurance reform or immigration reform, fixing our schools or reviving our economy, it is essential that we put aside the petty and the partisan, that we don't fall prey to arguments that would divide us, that would suggest that progress in America is a zero-sum game. We know the opposite is the truth. We know that here in America, we only prosper as one nation, as one people. We know that here in America, we rise or fall together. *Todos somos Americanos*.

We are called to rise above the politics of the moment to meet the challenges of our time. That's why I'm here. That's why the Congressional Hispanic Caucus is here. That's why all of you are here. Because I know and you know that this new generation of Hispanic leaders—the focus of this gathering and this organization—all of you know you haven't

worked so hard and come so far just to watch history. You came here to make history. Together, that's what we can do. Together, that's what we must do. That's what we're already beginning to do.

I am absolutely confident that if all of us work together, if all of us support the extraordinary efforts of the members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, if you support the efforts of this administration to finally fix our immigration system and put our kids into college and make sure that folks can stay in their homes and that job opportunities exist for everybody and not just some, if we can lift the tone of the debate so that we're not scoring political points just by turning on each other, but we're instead scoring points for all of America by solving problems, if that's our attitude, nothing can stop us. Think about how far we have come. But we have so much more to do. We have so much more—such a longer road to travel. It's going to be up to all of you. And I am grateful for the opportunity to be your partner in this extraordinary journey.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:09 p.m. at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to entertainer Marc Anthony and his wife Jennifer Lopez; and Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 17. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on Missile Defense Systems in Europe
September 17, 2009

Good morning. As Commander in Chief, I'm committed to doing everything in my power to advance our national security, and that includes strengthening our defenses against any and all threats to our people, our troops, and our friends and allies around the world.

And one of those threats is the danger posed by ballistic missiles. As I said during the campaign, President Bush was right that Iran's ballistic missile program poses a significant threat. And that's why I'm committed to deploying strong missile defense systems which are adaptable to the threats of the 21st century.

The best way to responsibly advance our security and the security of our allies is to deploy a missile defense system that best responds to the threats that we face and that utilizes technology that is both proven and cost effective.

In keeping with that commitment and a congressionally mandated review, I ordered a comprehensive assessment of our missile defense program in Europe. And after an extensive process, I have approved the unanimous recommendations of my Secretary of Defense and my Joint Chiefs of Staff to strengthen America's defenses against ballistic missile attack.

This new approach will provide capabilities sooner, build on proven systems, and offer greater defenses against the threat of missile attack than the 2007 European missile defense program.

This decision was guided by two principal factors. First, we have updated our intelligence assessment of Iran's missile programs, which emphasizes the threat posed by Iran's short- and medium-range missiles, which are capable of reaching Europe. There's no substitute for Iran complying with its international obligations regarding its nuclear program, and we, along with our allies and partners, will continue to pursue strong diplomacy to ensure that Iran lives up to these international obligations. But this new ballistic missile defense program will best address the threat posed by Iran's ongoing ballistic missile defense program.

Second, we have made specific and proven advances in our missile defense technology, particularly with regard to land- and sea-based interceptors and the sensors that support them. Our new approach will therefore deploy technologies that are proven and cost effective and that counter the current threat, and do so sooner than the previous program. Because our

approach will be phased and adaptive, we will retain the flexibility to adjust and enhance our defenses as the threat and technology continue to evolve.

To put it simply, our new missile defense architecture in Europe will provide stronger, smarter, and swifter defenses of American forces and America's allies. It is more comprehensive than the previous program, it deploys capabilities that are proven and cost effective, and it sustains and builds upon our commitment to protect the U.S. homeland against long-range ballistic missile threats, and it ensures and enhances the protection of all our NATO allies.

Now, this approach is also consistent with NATO missile—NATO's missile defense efforts and provides opportunities for enhanced international collaboration going forward. We will continue to work cooperatively with our close friends and allies, the Czech Republic and Poland, who had agreed to host elements of the previous program. I've spoken to the Prime Ministers of both the Czech Republic and Poland about this decision and reaffirmed our deep and close ties. Together, we are committed to a broad range of cooperative efforts to strengthen our collective defense, and we are bound by the solemn commitment of NATO's Article 5 that an attack on one is an attack on all.

We've also repeatedly made clear to Russia that its concerns about our previous missile defense programs were entirely unfounded. Our clear and consistent focus has been the threat posed by Iran's ballistic missile program, and that continues to be our focus and the basis of the program that we're announcing today.

In confronting that threat, we welcome Russians' cooperation to bring its missile defense capabilities into a broader defense of our common strategic interests, even as we continue to—we continue our shared efforts to end Iran's illicit nuclear program.

Now, going forward, my administration will continue to consult closely with Congress and with our allies as we deploy this system, and we will rigorously evaluate both the threat posed by ballistic missiles and the technology that we are developing to counter it. I'm confident that with the steps we've taken today, we have strengthened America's national security and enhanced our capacity to confront 21st-century threats.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:21 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Jan Fischer of the Czech Republic; and Prime Minister Donald Tusk of Poland.

Remarks at the University of Maryland in College Park, Maryland
September 17, 2009

The President. Thank you, College Park. Thank you so much. It is good to be back at the University of Maryland. I want to start by wishing "The Fridge" and the Terps good luck on the game this weekend. Maybe I'll even rub Testudo's nose before I leave.

We've got a number of extraordinary elected officials who are here. I just want to introduce them real quick. Your Governor, Martin O'Malley, is in the house. The two outstanding Senators from Maryland, Barbara Mikulski and Ben Cardin, are in the house. One of the finest leaders that we have in Congress, Steny Hoyer, is in the house. Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown is here. Prince George's County Executive Jack Johnson is here. Mayor Stephen Brayman is here. State Senate Majority Leader Tom Miller is in the house. Congresswoman Donna Edwards is here; Congressman Elijah Cummings; Congressman

Chris Van Hollen; Congressman Sarbanes is here; Congressman Butch [Dutch]* Ruppersberger is here.

And to your president, Dan Mote, president of the University of Maryland, thank you so much. President Mote.

You know——

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Who?

You know, the last time I was here it was in the heat of a very long and very tough campaign. And in that campaign, I promised to be a President who—you guys can sit down, by the way. [*Laughter*]

In that campaign, I promised to be a President who didn't just clean up yesterday's crises; I didn't want to be a President who was just content with standing still. I promised to be a President who would build a better future, who would move this Nation forward, who would ensure that this generation—your generation—had the same chances and the same opportunities that our parents gave us. That's what I'm here to do. That's why I ran for President of the United States of America. I ran for President because of people like Rachel. Did she not do an outstanding job in the introduction?

Part of that promise is an economy that leads the world in science and technology and innovation. Part of that promise is a clean energy revolution that protects our planet, protects our security, creates jobs of the future right here in the United States of America. Part of it is giving every citizen the skills and the education they need to compete with any worker in the world, just like you're getting right here at the University of Maryland. And today we are on the cusp of taking another big step forward towards fulfilling that promise.

A few miles from here, the House of Representatives will soon be voting on a plan that would finally make student—the student loan process simpler and more affordable for millions of young Americans. This plan would end the billions upon billions of dollars in unwarranted subsidies that we hand out to banks and financial institutions, money that doesn't do anything to make your loans any cheaper. Instead, we're going to use that money to guarantee access to low-cost loans no matter what the economy looks like. We'll use it to strengthen Pell grants and Perkins loans to make college more affordable. We'll shore up our system of community colleges. And we will simplify the complicated, convoluted financial aid forms so it's easier for you to apply for help and get the financing that you need.

Now, these are reforms that have been talked about for years, but they're always blocked by special interests and their lobbyists. Well, because you voted for change in November, we're going to bring change in the House of Representatives today. And then we will take this battle for America's students and America's working families to the Senate. And then I intend to sign this bill into law. Because that's the change you worked for, that's the change you voted for, that's the change we're going to deliver.

But, Terps, we can't stop there. There are still those in Washington who are resistant to change, who are more willing to defend the status quo than address the real concerns of the American people.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. What can I tell you? [*Laughter*] They're still out there. We're facing the same kind of resistance on another defining struggle of this generation, and that's the issue of health insurance reform.

Now, let me say, when you're young, I know this isn't always an issue that you have at the top of your mind. You think you're invulnerable. That's how I thought.

Audience member. We love you, Obama!

The President. I love you back.

Now, I'm sure that some of you wondered why this college required that all new students have health insurance this semester. Well, here's why. Here's why. Every day, the one in three adults—one in three young adults who don't have health insurance live one accident or one illness away from bankruptcy. Think about what would have happened with Rachel if she hadn't had health insurance. Nearly half of these young people have trouble paying their medical bills. Nearly 40 percent are in debt

* White House correction.

because of them. I mean, think about adding the debt you already have for college, on top of that, another 10,000 or 20,000 or 30,000 or $50,000 worth of debt because you get sick.

Some of these Americans don't get insurance because they feel young and healthy. But some work part time or for small businesses, where you aren't offered health insurance. And it's just too expensive to buy coverage on your own.

And even if you have coverage, insurance companies today, they can drop it or water it down when you're sick and you need it the most. Or they can decide that they won't pay the full cost of your care and make you pay the rest of it out of pocket, even if it's thousands upon thousands of dollars. That's why more than one-third of all young adults, including those with insurance, have had trouble paying their medical bills. That's why one-fourth of all young adults are paying off medical debt.

And we've heard some horror stories during the course of this debate. There's the young father I met in Colorado; his child was diagnosed with severe hemophilia the day after he was born. And they had insurance, but because there was a cap on their coverage, as one child's medical bills piled up, this father was left frantically to search for another option or face tens of thousands of dollars of debt.

[*At this point, there was an interruption in the audience.*]

Another woman from Texas was about to get a double mastectomy when her insurance company canceled her policy because she forgot to declare a case of acne. By the time she had her insurance reinstated, her breast cancer——

[*The interruption in the audience continued.*]

What's going on, guys? We're doing okay. Relax. Everybody is all right. We're doing fine.

Let me talk about—I want everybody to understand this. You had a young woman who was diagnosed with cancer, but because she had a case of acne that the insurance company said hadn't been declared, they decided they wouldn't cover her. By the time her insurance was reinstated, her breast cancer had more than doubled in size. Now, these stories are heartbreaking; they are wrong. Nobody in America should be treated that way. And we are going to bring about change this year.

Now, at its core—listen up. At its core, that's what this issue is about. Health care is about more than the details of a policy, it's about what kind of country you want to be. Young people, it's about what kind of country you want to be. We are the only nation on Earth that leaves millions of people without health insurance. We spend more than any country on Earth, and we're not any healthier for it. So this is about what kind of country you want your children to grow up in.

A lot of you here today and a lot of young people across the country gave your time and your effort to this campaign because you believed that America can still do great things. You believed that in this country, we don't fear the future, we shape the future. We don't feed on division and anger, we feed on hope and possibility. That's what America is about; that's what we're called to affirm right now.

It has now been nearly a century since Teddy Roosevelt first called for health care reform. It's been attempted by nearly every President and every Congress since. And our failure to get it done, year after year and decade after decade, has placed a burden on families and on businesses and on taxpayers that we can no longer sustain. So I may not be the first President to take up the cause of health care reform, I am determined to be the last, with your help.

We will get this done. Now, the good news is, we are now closer to reform than we've ever been. After debating this issue for the better part of a year, there's now agreement in Congress on about 80 percent of what needs to be done. Four out of five committees in Congress have completed their work. Yesterday the Finance Committee, under the leadership of Max Baucus, put out its own bill. Each bill has its strengths, and there are a lot of similarities between them. And our overall efforts have been supported by an unprecedented coalition of hospitals and seniors' groups, businesses, drug companies even. Most importantly,

drugs—doctors and nurses are supporting this effort. We've got doctors—[*applause*]—medical students right here in the house.

See, I just want to point out, I think it's telling, some of the people who are most enthusiastic about health care reform are the very medical professionals who have firsthand knowledge about how badly the system needs to change. So don't—stop paying attention to the folks who are spreading false charges and crazy rumors about our plan; pay attention to the health care experts—the doctors and the nurses—who know our system best.

Now, I think it's fine that we've been hearing constructive criticism about these issues over the last several months because this is a big deal. That's how our democracy works. No one has all the right answers. We've all got a stake in getting this right. That's why I've said I will embrace good ideas, wherever they come from. We already have. But too often during this important debate we've also seen the same kind of partisan spectacle that has left so many people disappointed about Washington. Too many engage in scare tactics instead of honest debates. Too many use this as an opportunity to score short-term political points instead of working together to solve a long-term challenge. I've heard a lot of Republicans say they want to "kill Obamacare." Some may even raise money off it. But when you ask these folks what exactly my plan does, they've got it all wrong. When you ask them what their solution is, it amounts to the same old, same old, the same status quo that's given us higher costs and more uninsured and less security than you've ever had. It's more of the same.

Well, look, I will not accept the status quo as a solution. Not this time. Not now. The time for bickering is over. The time for games has passed. Now is the season for action. Now is the time to deliver on health care reform for the American people.

So just to make sure you're clear, here's what you need to know about our plan. For those who have health insurance, you'll have more security and stability. It will provide insurance to those who don't have insurance. It will slow the growth of health care costs for our families and our businesses and our Government.

So let me say, if you already have health insurance, nothing in this plan will require you to change what you have. What this plan will do is make the insurance you have work better for you. Because under this plan—listen up, young people—under my plan, if your parents have health insurance and you're currently on their policy, you will automatically be able to keep your coverage until you're 26 years old. That means you will know that you've got health insurance. If your parents don't have access to health insurance, one of the ideas on the table is to give folks under 25 the chance to buy low-cost insurance that will protect you from financial ruin if you get seriously ill.

Now, under this plan, it will also be against the law for insurance companies to deny you coverage because of a preexisting condition. You just heard Rachel's story. She's okay right now, she's thriving, but when she goes into the workforce and their insurance companies start asking, well, have you been sick before, right now she'd have trouble getting insurance. Under the bill that we sign, she will still be able to get coverage.

When I sign this bill, it will be against the law for insurance companies to drop your coverage when you get sick, water it down when you need it the most. They'll no longer be able to place some arbitrary cap on the amount of coverage you can receive in a given lifetime or a given year. We'll place a limit on how much you can be charged for out-of-pocket expenses. In the United States, nobody should go broke because they get sick. And insurance companies will be required to cover, with no extra charge, routine checkups and preventive care, because there's no reason we shouldn't be catching treatable illnesses, treatable diseases, before they get worse. That makes sense, that saves money, and it saves lives.

Now, if you don't have health insurance, the second part of this plan will finally afford—offer you quality, affordable choices. So if you lose your job or you change jobs, you'll be able to get coverage. If you decide you want to start your own business, you'll still be able to get coverage. We'll do this by creating a new insurance exchange, a marketplace where individuals and small businesses will be able to shop for an

affordable health insurance plan that works for them. That's how large companies and Government employees get affordable insurance. That's how I and everyone in Congress gets affordable insurance. You should have the same thing that Congress has.

Now, I've also said that one of the options in the insurance exchange should be a public insurance option. Now, let me be clear. Let me be clear: It would only be an option. No one would be forced to choose it. No one with insurance would be affected by it. But what it would do is provide more choice and more competition and put pressure on private insurers to make their policies affordable and treat their customers better.

Now, think about it. There's some folks who've said, "Well, this is a Government takeover of health care." We've got public universities and private universities; nobody says that we're taking over private colleges. What we're doing is giving students a choice. You should have a choice the same way in your health care.

Of course, the only way this plan works is if everybody fulfills their responsibility, not just Government, not just insurance companies, but employees and individuals. This school should be proud that every student is required to have health insurance. Since our plan will make sure that insurance is affordable for everybody, we're going to also say everybody needs to get insurance. Because if there are affordable options and people don't sign up, then the rest of us pay for somebody else's expensive emergency room care. And that's not fair. Improving our health care system only works if everybody does their part, and I think Americans are willing and ready to take on that responsibility.

Now, a lot of you may be asking, "You know, this plan sounds pretty good, but how are you going to pay for it? How do we make sure this doesn't add to the deficit that the next generation is going to have to be paying?" So here is what you need to know.

First, I won't sign a bill that adds one dime to our deficit, either now or in the future, period. Part of the reason I faced a trillion-dollar-plus deficit when I walked into the door of the White House is because too many initiatives over the last decade were not paid for, from the Iraq war to tax breaks for the wealthy. I won't make the same mistake when it comes to health care.

Second, we've estimated that most of this plan can be paid for by finding savings within the existing health care system. There's all kinds of waste and abuse. The doctors and nurses know this. Right now too much of the hard-earned savings and tax dollars we spend on health care doesn't make you healthier. That's especially true when it comes to Medicare and Medicaid. So without taking any money from the Medicare trust fund that gives benefits to your grandparents—they depend on it for their health care—we're going to eliminate hundreds of billions of dollars of waste and fraud and subsidies to insurance companies that pad their profits but don't do anything to make seniors healthier.

Now, some of my Republican colleagues have also supported reforming our medical malpractice laws as a way to cut down health care costs. I don't think this is a silver bullet, but I want to explore the idea. So today I directed my Secretary of Health and Human Services to move forward with programs that will help us put patient safety first while allowing doctors to focus on practicing medicine instead of defending against lawsuits.

So, Maryland, this is the plan I'm proposing. It's a plan that incorporates ideas from Democrats and Republicans. And I'm going to seek common ground in the weeks ahead. If you come to me with a set of serious proposals, I will be there to listen. My door is always open. But know this: I will not waste time with those who've made the calculation that it's better to kill health reform than to improve our health care system. I won't stand by while special interests do the same old tricks to keep things exactly the way they are. And I said last week at the speech to the joint session, if you misrepresent what's in our plan, we'll call you out. We will call you out.

Now, I said we're closer to reform than we've ever been. But this is the hard part. This is when the special interests gear up. This is when the folks who want to kill reform fight

back with everything they've got. This is when they spread all kinds of rumors to scare and intimidate Americans. This is what they always do.

That's why I need your help. When I was running for President, I never said change would be easy. Change is hard. It's always been hard. Civil rights was hard. Getting women the right to vote, that was hard. Making sure that Social Security was there for our seniors, that was hard. Getting Medicare in place, that was hard. I know there are doubts that creep into people's minds. I know there's a tendency during tough times for folks to turn on each other and get mad and get angry. But our history tells us that each and every time we faced a choice between the easy road that leads to slow decline or the hard road that leads to something better, something higher, we take the higher road.

That's how Americans are: We refuse to stand still. We always want to move forward. And that journey doesn't place—take—that doesn't start in Washington, DC. It begins right here in College Park. It begins on campuses like this one. It always has. Just like the change that began in our campaign, it starts with people, especially young people, who are determined to take this Nation's destiny into their own hands.

You know, some of you remember during the campaign we had a slogan, "Fired up!"

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. Ready to go! Not everybody here knows how this story came about, so I'm going to tell it again, because it bears on health care reform. This is early in the campaign when none of you knew how to pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] I had just announced, and I was looking for support. I had to go down to South Carolina; it was an early primary State. I went down to Greenville for a legislative dinner. And I was sitting next to a State representative there, and I wanted her support. I needed some endorsements; nobody supported me at the time.

So I said, "Madam Representative, I need your endorsement." She said, "I will give you my endorsement if you come to my hometown, Greenwood, South Carolina." And I said—I'd had a glass of wine—I said, "Fine." [*Laughter*] "I'm coming." Come to find out that Greenwood is an hour and a half from everyplace else. [*Laughter*] It's in the middle of nowhere.

So about a month later, I fly back into Greenville. I'm tired, I'm sleepy, and I've been campaigning for 2 weeks straight. I mean, I'm dragging my bags to my hotel room, and suddenly, I get a tap on my shoulders—my staffers—I said, "What?" They said, "We've got to be in the car at 6:30 tomorrow morning." I said, "Why 6:30? Why?" "Because we've got to go to Greenwood like you promised." [*Laughter*]

So the next morning I wake up, and I feel terrible, dragging out of bed, feel like a college student, feel like I'm back in college and don't want to wake up, feel like I've been staying up late doing who knows what. [*Laughter*] I know. I remember how you all are. [*Laughter*] So I just feel—I'm exhausted. I go over to the curtains to try to get some sunlight, wake myself up. It's pouring down rain outside—[*laughter*]—miserable day. I go to get some coffee, I open up the newspaper, there's a bad story about me in the New York Times. [*Laughter*] I go downstairs, and my umbrella busts open—[*laughter*]—and I get poured on. So by the time I'm in the car, I'm wet and I'm sleepy and I'm tired and I'm mad. [*Laughter*]

And we start driving, and we're driving and we're driving, and it's an hour and a half, and I realized I'm going to have to drive an hour and a half back. [*Laughter*] And when I—and finally, we get to Greenwood, although you don't know you're in Greenwood right away. [*Laughter*] But there's a little park district building. We go into this park fieldhouse, I get a little more wet, get inside, and after this long drive, waking up at 6:30, there are only about 20 people in the room—[*laughter*]—twenty people. And they're all kind of damp, and they don't look that excited to see me. [*Laughter*] And they don't really know how to pronounce my name either. [*Laughter*]

But you know, I'm running for President, so I'm shaking hands—"How do you do? Nice to meet you." Suddenly, I hear this voice behind me shout out, "Fired up?" [*Laughter*] And I'm startled. [*Laughter*] But everybody around me, they just think this is normal. They say, "Fired up!" And suddenly, I hear this voice, "Ready to go?" And everybody goes, "Ready to go!" I say,

"What's going on?" I look behind me, there's this small woman, she's about 5 feet, 5′2″. She's about 50, 60 years old. And she's just—she's dressed like she just came from church—she's got a big church hat. [*Laughter*] And she's looking at me, she's smiling, and she says, "Fired up?" [*Laughter*]

Come to find out that this is a city council member from Greenwood. She also, by the way, moonlights as a private detective—true story—[*laughter*]—true, true story. But she's mainly known for her chant. She does this everywhere she goes. Everywhere, at any event—football game, at a city council meeting—she says, "Fired up?" And everybody says, "Fired up!" And "Ready to go?"—everybody says, "Ready to go!"

So for the next 5 minutes, she keeps on doing this—she says, "Fired up?" "Fired up!" "Ready to go?" "Ready to go!" And I realize I'm being upstaged—[*laughter*]—by this woman. So I'm looking at my staff, asking what's going on here? When is this going to stop? [*Laughter*] And they're shrugging their shoulders; they don't know. [*Laughter*]

But here's the thing, Maryland. After about a minute, a couple minutes of this, suddenly I realize I'm feeling kind of fired up. [*Laughter*] I'm feeling like I'm ready to go. So I start joining in the chant. And for the rest of the day, wherever we went, whenever I saw my staff I said, "Are you fired up?" They'd say, "I'm fired up, boss!" "Are you ready to go?" They'd say, "I'm ready to go!"

So it just—it goes to show you—and this is so important for young people—it goes to show you, one voice can change a room. And if a voice can change a room, it can change a city. And if it can change a city, it can change a State. If it can change a State, it can change a nation. If it can change a nation, it can change the world.

We will change the world with your voice. We need the voices of young people to transform this Nation to meet up to the meaning of its dream. I need your voice. So I want to know: Are you fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. Fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. Fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. Let's go change the world. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:49 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Ralph Friedgen, head coach, University of Maryland football team; Rachel Peck, student, University of Maryland, who introduced the President; Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius; South Carolina State Rep. J. Anne Parks; and Edith Childs, city council member, Greenwood, SC.

Remarks on Presenting Posthumously the Congressional Medal of Honor to Sergeant First Class Jared C. Monti
September 17, 2009

Please be seated. Good afternoon, and welcome to the White House.

Of all the privileges of serving as President, there's no greater honor than serving as Commander in Chief of the finest military that the world has ever known. And of all the military decorations that a President and a nation can bestow, there is none higher than the Medal of Honor.

It has been nearly 150 years since our Nation first presented this medal for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty. And in those nearly 150 years—through Civil War and two World Wars, Korea and Vietnam, Desert Storm and Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq, and countless battles in between—tens of millions of Americans have worn the

uniform. But fewer than 3,500 have been recognized with the Medal of Honor. And in our time, these remarkable Americans are literally one in a million. And today we recognize another: Sergeant First Class Jared C. Monti.

The Medal of Honor reflects the admiration and gratitude of the Nation. So we are joined by Members of Congress, including from Sergeant Monti's home State of Massachusetts Senator John Kerry and Congressman Barney Frank. We're joined by our Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen, and leaders from across the Armed Forces.

We are joined by the leaders of the Army to which Sergeant Monti dedicated his life: Secretary Pete Geren; our incoming Secretary—confirmed by the Senate last night—John McHugh; Chief of Staff General George Casey; Sergeant Major of the Army Ken Preston; and Jared's fellow soldiers and commanders from the legendary 10th Mountain Division. And we are joined by those who now welcome Sergeant Monti into their storied ranks, members of the Medal of Honor Society.

But today is not about high officials and those with stars on their shoulders. It's a celebration of a young soldier and those who loved him, who made him into the man he was and who join us today: his mother Janet, his father Paul, his brother Tim, and his sister Niccole—and from his grandmother Marjorie to his 6 year old niece Carys and cousins and aunts and uncles from across America—more than 120 proud family and friends.

Duty, honor, country, service, sacrifice, heroism; these are words of weight. But as people—as a people and as a culture, we often invoke them lightly. We toss them around freely. But do we really grasp the meaning of these values? Do we truly understand the nature of these virtues, to serve and to sacrifice? Jared Monti knew. The Monti family knows. And they know that the actions we honor today were not a passing moment of courage. They were the culmination of a life of character and commitment.

There was Jared's compassion. He was the kid at school who, upon seeing a student eating lunch alone, would walk over and befriend him. He was the teenager who cut down a spruce tree in his yard so a single mom in town would have a Christmas tree for her children. He even bought the ornaments and the presents. He was the soldier in Afghanistan who received care packages, including fresh clothes, and gave them away to Afghan children who needed them more.

There was Jared's perseverance. Cut from the high school basketball team, he came back next year, and the next year, and the next year—three times—finally making varsity and outscoring some of the top players. Told he was too young for the military, he joined the National Guard's delayed entry program as a junior in high school. And that summer, while other kids were at the beach, Jared was doing drills.

There was Jared's strength and skill. The championship wrestler and triathlete who went off to basic training, just 18 years old, and then served with distinction as a forward observer, with the heavy responsibility of calling in air strikes. He returned from his first tour in Afghanistan highly decorated, including a Bronze Star and Army Commendation Medal for Valor.

And there was Jared's deep and abiding love for his fellow soldiers. Maybe it came from his mom, who was a nurse; maybe it came from his dad, a teacher. Guided by the lessons he learned at home, Jared became the consummate NCO, the noncommissioned officer caring for his soldiers and teaching his troops. He called them his "boys." And although, obviously, he was still young himself, some of them called him "grandpa." [*Laughter*]

Compassion, perseverance, strength, a love for his fellow soldiers; those are the values that defined Jared Monti's life and the values he displayed in the actions that we recognize here today.

It was June 21, 2006, in the remotest northeast of Afghanistan, near the border with Pakistan. Sergeant Monti was a team leader on a 16-man patrol. They'd been on the move for 3 days, down dirt roads, sloshing through rivers, hiking up steep mountain trails, their heavy gear on their backs, moving at night and in the early morning to avoid the scorching 100-degree heat. Their mission: to keep watch on the

valley down below in advance of an operation to clear the area of militants.

Those who were there remember that evening on the mountain, a rocky ridge not much bigger than this room. Some were standing guard, knowing they had been spotted by a man in the valley. Some were passing out MREs and water. There was talk of home and plans for leave. Jared was overheard remembering his time serving in Korea. Then, just before dark, there was a shuffle of feet in the woods. And that's when the tree line exploded in a wall of fire.

One member of the patrol said it was "like thousands of rifles crackling." Bullets and heavy machine gunfire ricocheting across the rocks; rocket-propelled grenades raining down; fire so intense that weapons were shot right out of their hands. Within minutes, one soldier was killed; another was wounded. Everyone dove for cover, behind a tree, a rock, a stone wall. This patrol of 16 men was facing a force of some 50 fighters. Outnumbered, the risk was real. They might be overrun. And they may—might not make it out alive.

And that's when Jared Monti did what he was trained to do. With the enemy advancing, so close they could hear their voices, he got on his radio and started calling in artillery. When the enemy tried to flank them, he grabbed a gun and drove them back. And when they came back again, he tossed a grenade and drove them back again. And when these American soldiers saw one of their own wounded, lying in the open, some 20 yards away, exposed to the approaching enemy, Jared Monti did something no amount of training can instill. His patrol leader said he'd go, but Jared said, "No, he is my soldier. I'm going to get him."

It was written long ago that "the bravest are surely those who have the clearest vision of what is before them, glory and danger alike, and yet, notwithstanding, go out to meet it." Jared Monti saw the danger before him. And he went out to meet it.

He handed off his radio. He tightened his chin strap. And with his men providing cover, Jared rose and started to run into all those incoming bullets, into all those rockets. Upon seeing Jared, the enemy in the woods unleashed a firestorm. He moved low and fast, yard after yard, then dove behind a stone wall.

A moment later, he rose again. And again, they fired everything they had at him, forcing him back. Faced with overwhelming enemy fire, Jared could have stayed where he was, behind that wall. But that was not the kind of soldier Jared Monti was. He embodied that creed all soldiers strive to meet: "I will always place the mission first. I will never accept defeat. I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade." And so for a third time, he rose. For a third time, he ran toward his fallen comrade. Said his patrol leader, it "was the bravest thing I had ever seen a soldier do."

They say it was a rocket-propelled grenade; that Jared made it within a few yards of his wounded soldier. They say that his final words, there on that ridge far from home, were of his faith and his family: "I've made peace with God. Tell my family that I love them."

And then, as the artillery that Jared had called in came down, the enemy fire slowed, then stopped. The patrol had defeated the attack. They had held on, but not without a price. By the end of the night, Jared and three others, including the soldier he died trying to save, had given their lives.

I'm told that Jared was a very humble guy, that he would have been uncomfortable with all this attention, that he'd say he was just doing his job, and that he'd want to share this moment with others who were there that day. And so, as Jared would have wanted, we also pay tribute to those who fell alongside him: Staff Sergeant Patrick Lybert; Private First Class Brian Bradbury; Staff Sergeant Heathe Craig.

And we honor all the soldiers he loved and who loved him back, among them noncommissioned officers who remind us why the Army has designated this "The Year of the NCO" in honor of all those sergeants who are the backbone of America's Army. They are Jared's friends and fellow soldiers watching this ceremony today in Afghanistan. They are the soldiers who this morning held their own ceremony on an Afghan mountain at the post that now bears his name: Combat Outpost Monti.

And they are his "boys," surviving members of Jared's patrol from the 10th Mountain Division who are here with us today. And I would ask them all to please stand.

Like Jared, these soldiers know the meaning of duty and of honor, of country. Like Jared, they remind us all that the price of freedom is great. And by their deeds, they challenge every American to ask this question: What can we do to be better citizens? What can we do to be worthy of such service and such sacrifice?

Sergeant First Class Jared C. Monti, in his proud hometown of Raynham, his name graces streets and scholarships. Across a grateful nation, it graces parks and military posts. From this day forward, it will grace the memorials to our Medal of Honor heroes. And this week, when Jared Monti would have celebrated his 34th birthday, we know that his name and legacy will live forever and shine brightest in the hearts of his family and friends who will love him always.

May God bless Jared Monti, and may He comfort the entire Monti family. And may God bless the United States of America.

Janet, Paul, would you please join me at the podium for the reading of the citation?

NOTE: The President spoke at 2 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Secretary of the Army Preston M. "Pete" Geren III; Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh; and SFC Christopher M. Cunningham, USA. Following the President's remarks, Lt. Col. Gina C. Humble, USAF, Air Force Aide to the President, read the citation.

Videotaped Remarks on the Observance of Rosh Hashanah
September 17, 2009

As members of the Jewish faith here in America and around the world gather to celebrate the High Holidays, I want to extend my warmest wishes for this New Year. *L'shanah Tovah Tikatevu*—may you have a good year, and may you be inscribed for blessings in the Book of Life.

Rosh Hashanah marks the start of a new year, a time of humble prayer, joyful celebration, and hope for a new beginning. Ten days later, Yom Kippur stands as a day of reflection and repentance. And this sacred time provides not just an opportunity for individual renewal and reconciliation, but for families, communities, and even nations to heal old divisions, seek new understandings, and come together to build a better world for our children and grandchildren.

At the dawn of this New Year, let us rededicate ourselves to that work. Let us reject the impulse to harden ourselves to others' suffering, and instead, make a habit of empathy, of recognizing ourselves in each other, and extending our compassion to those in need.

Let us resist prejudice, intolerance, and indifference in whatever forms they may take. Let us stand up strongly to the scourge of anti-Semitism, which is still prevalent in far too many corners of our world. Let us work to extend the rights and freedoms so many of us enjoy to all the world's citizens: to speak and worship freely, to live free from violence and oppression, to make of our lives what we will. And let us work to achieve lasting peace and security for the State of Israel, so that the Jewish state is fully accepted by its neighbors, and its children can live their dreams free from fear. That's why my administration is actively pursuing the lasting peace that has eluded Israel and its neighbors for so long.

Throughout history, the Jewish people have been, in the words of the Prophet Isaiah, "a light unto the nations." Through an abiding commitment to faith, family, and justice, Jews have overcome extraordinary adversity, holding fast to the hope of a better tomorrow.

In this season of renewal, we celebrate that spirit, we honor a great and ancient faith, and we rededicate ourselves to the work of repairing this world.

Michelle and I wish all who celebrate Rosh Hashanah a healthy, peaceful, and sweet New Year.

NOTE: The President's remarks were videotaped at approximately 2:15 p.m. on September 11 in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released Arabic, French, Hebrew, Persian, Russia, Spanish, and Turkish language transcripts of these remarks.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Education Reform Legislation
September 17, 2009

I want to thank the House of Representatives for the progress they made today on the reforms I've proposed to strengthen higher education and our early education system.

Today the House delivered a historic set of reforms to the financial aid system that will offer relief to students and families. This bill will end the billions upon billions of dollars in unwarranted subsidies that we hand out to banks and financial institutions and will use that money to guarantee access to low-cost loans and strengthen Pell grants and Perkins loans that make college more affordable. This bill also follows through on our plan to shore up our community college system, simplifies the complicated financial aid forms to make it easier for students to apply for and get the help they need, and will strengthen standards and improve outcomes in early learning programs. I look forward to signing these reforms into law.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 3221. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

The President's Weekly Address
September 19, 2009

Leaders of the world's largest economies will gather next week in Pittsburgh for the second time this year. The first meeting of the G–20 nations in April came at the height of the global financial crisis, a crisis that required unprecedented international cooperation to jump-start the world's economies and help break the downward spiral that enveloped all our nations.

At next week's summit, we'll have, in effect, a 5-month checkup to review the steps each nation has taken, separately and together, to break the back of this economic crisis. And the good news is that we've made real progress since the last time we met, here at home and around the world.

In February, we enacted a Recovery Act, providing relief to Americans who need it, preventing layoffs, and putting Americans back to work. We've worked to unlock frozen credit markets, spurring lending to Americans looking to buy homes or cars, take out student loans, or finance small businesses. And we've challenged other nations to join us not only to spur global demand but to address the underlying problems that caused such a deep global recession in the first place.

Because of the steps taken by our Nation and all nations, we can now say that we have stopped our economic freefall. But we also know that stopping the bleeding isn't nearly enough. Our work is far from over. We know we still have a lot to do here at home to build an economy that's producing good jobs for all those who are looking for work today. And we know we still have a lot to do, in conjunction with the nations around the world, to strengthen the rules governing financial markets and ensure that we never again find ourselves in the precarious situation we found ourselves in just 1 year ago.

As I told leaders of our financial community in New York City earlier this week, a return to normalcy can't breed complacency. To protect our economy and people from another market meltdown, our Government needs to fundamentally reform the rules governing financial firms and markets to meet the challenges of

the 21st century. We can't allow the thirst for reckless schemes that produce quick profits and fat executive bonuses to override the security of our entire financial system and leave taxpayers on the hook for cleaning up the mess. And as the world's largest economy, we must lead, not just by word, but by example, understanding that in the 21st century, financial crises know no borders. All of us need to act more responsibly on behalf of a better economic future.

That's why, at next week's G–20 summit, we'll discuss some of the steps that are required to safeguard our global financial system and close gaps in regulation around the world, gaps that permitted the kinds of reckless risk-taking and irresponsibility that led to the crisis. And that's why I've called on Congress to put in place a series of tough, commonsense rules of the road that will protect consumers from abuse, let markets function fairly and freely, and help prevent a crisis like this from ever happening again.

Central to these reforms is a new consumer financial protection agency. Part of what led to this crisis were not just decisions made on Wall Street, but also unsustainable mortgage loans made across the country. While many folks took on more than they knew they could afford, too often folks signed contracts they didn't fully understand offered by lenders who didn't always tell the truth. That's why we need clear rules, clearly enforced. And that's what this agency will do.

Consumers shouldn't have to worry about loan contracts written to confuse, hidden fees attached to their mortgages, and financial penalties—whether through a credit card or debit card—that appear without a clear warning on their statements. And responsible lenders, including community banks, trying to do the right thing shouldn't have to worry about ruinous competition from unregulated and unscrupulous competitors.

Not surprisingly, lobbyists for big Wall Street banks are hard at work trying to stop reforms that would hold them accountable, and they want to keep things just the way they are. But we can't let politics as usual triumph so business as usual can reign. We can't let the narrow interests of a few come before the interests of all of us. We can't forget how close we came to the brink and perpetuate the broken system and breakdown of responsibility that made it possible.

In the weeks and months ahead, we have an opportunity to build on the work we've already done, an opportunity to rebuild our global economy stronger than before, an opportunity not only to protect the American people and America's economy but to promote sustained and balanced growth and prosperity for our Nation and all nations. And that's an opportunity I am determined to seize.

So, thanks for listening and thanks for watching, and to our Jewish friends who are celebrating Rosh Hashanah, have a happy and healthy New Year. *Shanah Tovah*.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:25 p.m. on September 18 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on September 19. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 18, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on September 19.

Statement on the Observance of Eid al-Fitr
September 19, 2009

As Muslims in the United States and around the world complete the month of Ramadan and celebrate Eid al-Fitr, Michelle and I would like to extend our personal greetings on this joyous occasion.

Eid is a time to celebrate the completion of 30 days and nights of devotion. But even on this festive occasion, Muslims remember those less fortunate, including those impacted by poverty, hunger, conflict, and disease. Throughout the month, Muslim communities collect and distribute *zakat al-fitr* so that all Muslims are able to participate in this day of celebration. As I said in Cairo, my administration is working to ensure

that Muslims are able to fulfill their charitable obligations not just during Ramadan, but throughout the year.

On behalf of the American people, we congratulate Muslims in the United States and around the world on this blessed day. *Eid Mubarak*.

Remarks at Hudson Valley Community College in Troy, New York
September 21, 2009

Thank you. Hello, Hudson Valley! Thank you very much. Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Thank you. Thank you very much. What a wonderful reception. It is great to be here. Thanks for whoever organized the weather. [*Laughter*]

I want to, first of all, say thank you to Jill Biden, who has been a teacher for almost three decades, and she's spent most of that time in community colleges. She understands, as all of you do, the power of these institutions to prepare students for the 21st-century jobs and to prepare America for a 21st-century global economy. And that's what's happening right here at Hudson Valley Community College. So give yourselves a big round of applause.

We've got some special guests here that I want to acknowledge, in addition to Jill. First of all, a wonderful man, the Governor of the great State of New York, David Paterson, is in the house; your shy and retiring attorney general, Andrew Cuomo, is in the house. Andrew is doing great work enforcing the laws that need to be enforced.

I want to thank the comptroller—Thomas DiNapoli is in the house. Speaker Sheldon Silver is in the house; the Democratic conference leader, State Senator John Sampson; Albany Mayor Gerald Jennings; we've got three outstanding Members of Congress who are just doing great work every single day: Maurice Hinchey, Paul Tonko, Scott Murphy—please give them a big round of applause.

The president of Hudson Valley Community College, Andrew Matonak, is in the house. Did I pronounce that right, Andrew? And Joe Sarubbi, executive director of TEC–SMART, who did a—gave me a wonderful tour—[*applause*].

Now, you may ask, why are we here at Hudson Valley? We're here because this is a place where anyone with the desire to take their career to a new level or start a new career altogether has the opportunity to pursue that dream. This is a place where people of all ages and backgrounds—even in the face of obstacles, even in the face of very difficult personal challenges—can take a chance on a brighter future for themselves and for their family.

I was just talking to the mayor of Troy, who was talking—we were in a room, and he was saying how he had studied calculus in the room where we were taking a picture. And I had to inform him I didn't take calculus. [*Laughter*] But he was testimony; he was an example of what you can do because of an institution like this.

And I know that here in Troy, you want and need that chance after so many years of hard times. Communities like this one were once the heart of America's manufacturing strength. But over the last few decades, you've borne the brunt of a changing economy which has seen manufacturing plants close in the face of global competition. So while all of America has been gripped by the current economic crisis, folks in Troy and upstate New York have been dealing with what amounts to almost a permanent recession for years, an economic downturn that's driven more and more young people from their hometowns.

I also know that while a lot of people have come here promising better news, that news has been hard to come by, despite the determined efforts of leaders who are here today and many who are not. And part of the reason is that while people in this city work hard to meet their responsibilities, I have to confess that some in Washington haven't always lived up to theirs.

For too long, as old divisions and special interests reigned, Washington has shown neither the inclination, nor the ability, to tackle our

toughest challenges. Meanwhile, businesses were saddled with ever-rising health care costs, the economy was weakened by ever-growing dependence on foreign oil, our investment in cutting-edge research declined, our schools fell further short, growth focused on short-term gains and fueled by debt and reckless risk, which led to a cycle of precipitous booms and painful busts.

And meanwhile, too many in Washington stood by and let it happen. Now, after so many years of failing to act, there are those who now suggest that there's really not much the Government can or should do to make a difference, that what we've seen in places like Troy is inevitable, that somehow the parts of our country that helped us lead in the last century don't have what it takes to help us lead in this one. And I'm here to tell you that that is just flat out wrong. What we have here in this community is talented people, entrepreneurs, world-class learning institutions. The ingredients are right here for growth and success and a better future.

These young people are testimony to it. You are proving that right here in the Hudson Valley. Students here are training full-time while working part time at GE Energy in Schenectady, becoming a new generation of American leaders in a new generation of American manufacturing. IBM is partnered with the University at Albany; their partnership in nanotechnology is helping students train in the industries in which America has the potential to lead. Rensselaer is partnering not only with this institution but with businesses throughout the Tech Valley. And early next year, Hudson Valley Community College state-of-the-art TEC–SMART training facility is set to open side by side with Global Foundry's coming state-of-the-art semiconductor plant.

So we know that upstate New York can succeed, just like we know that there are pockets in the Midwest that used to be hubs of manufacturing. They're now retooling; they're reinventing themselves. We know that can happen. We know that in a global economy, where there's no room for error and there's certainly no room for wasted potential, America needs you to succeed.

So as we emerge from this current economic crisis, our great challenge will be to ensure that we don't just drift into the future, accepting less for our children, accepting less for America. We have to choose instead what past generations have done: to shape a brighter future through hard work and innovation. That's how we'll not only recover, but that's how we'll also build stronger than before: strong enough to compete in the global economy, strong enough to avoid the cycles of boom and bust that have wreaked so much havoc, strong enough to create and support the jobs of the future in the industries of the future.

So today my administration is releasing our strategy to foster new jobs, new businesses, and new industries, by laying the groundwork and the ground rules to best tap our innovative potential. This work began with the recovery plan that we passed several months ago, which devoted well over $100 billion to innovation, from high-tech classrooms to health information technology, from more efficient homes to more fuel-efficient cars, from building a smart electricity grid to laying down high-speed rail.

But our efforts don't end there, for this strategy is about far more than just recovery, it's about sustained growth and widely shared prosperity. And it's rooted in a simple idea: That if Government does its modest part, there's no stopping the most powerful and generative economic force that the world has ever known, and that is the American people.

Our strategy begin where innovation so often does: in the classroom and in the laboratory and in the networks that connect them to the broader economy. These are the building blocks of innovation: education, infrastructure, research.

We know that the nations that outeducate us today will outcompete us tomorrow. The ability of new industries to thrive depends on workers with the knowledge and the know-how to contribute in those fields. Unfortunately, today, our primary and secondary schools continue to trail many of our competitors, especially in the keys—areas of math and science. Hundreds of thousands of high school graduates who are prepared for college don't go to 4-year or 2-year schools because it's just too expensive; they run out of money. And roughly 40 percent of

students who start college don't complete college. So all along that education pipeline, too many people—too many of our young, talented people—are slipping through the cracks. It's not only heartbreaking for those students, it's a loss for our economy and our country.

Now, I know that for a long time politicians have spoken of training—of job training as a silver bullet, of college as a cure-all. It's not. I don't want to pretend that it is. We know that. But we also know that in the coming years, jobs requiring at least an associate's degree are projected to grow twice as fast as jobs requiring no college experience. Think about that: twice as fast. We will not fill those jobs or keep those jobs here in America without graduating more students, including millions more students from community colleges.

And that's why I've asked Dr. Biden to travel the country promoting the opportunities that community colleges offer. That's why I'm grateful that Senator Chuck Schumer, who couldn't be here today, has shown tremendous leadership on this issue. And that's why I've set this ambitious goal: By 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. We used to be number one; we should be number one again.

Now, to achieve this goal, we're going to need motivated students, motivated families, motivated communities, local leaders who are doing their part, State leaders who are doing their part. But the Federal Government has its part to do as well.

So to reach this goal, we've increased Pell grants and created a simplified $2,500 tax credit for college tuition. We've made student aid applications less complicated and ensured that that aid is not based on the income of a job that you've lost. I hear too much from folks who say, "I can't get any student aid because they're still looking at my income taxes when I had a job as opposed to my situation right now."

We've also passed a new GI bill of rights to help soldiers coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan begin a new life in a new economy. And the recovery plan has helped close State budget shortfalls—I think the Governor will testify—because those shortfalls put enormous pressure on public universities and community colleges, while also, we've made historic investments in elementary and secondary schools. So we're helping States get through some very tough times without having to drastically cut back on the critical education infrastructure that's going to be so important.

Now, finally, through the american graduation initiative that I've proposed, we're going to reform and strengthen community colleges to help an additional 5 million Americans earn degrees and certificates in the next decade, because a new generation of innovations depends on a new generation of innovators.

And just last week, the House of Representatives passed a bill that will go a long way to reform the student loan system so that college is more affordable for more people. Right now the Federal Government provides a subsidy to banks to get them to lend money to students. The thing is, the Federal Government also guarantees the loans in case the students don't repay. So we're subsidizing banks to take on the risk of giving loans to students, even though taxpayers are absorbing the risk anyway. That doesn't make much sense. It costs us more than $80 billion. If we just cut out the middleman—the banks—and lent directly to the students, the Federal Government would save that money, and we could use it for what's actually important: helping students afford and succeed in college.

That's why—that's what the bill—I want to emphasize this just because every once in a while you may not know what your Members of Congress are doing for you. These three guys right here are standing up for young people. We need Senators to do the same. The bill that they voted on—the bill that I proposed—here's what it does: It takes the $80 billion the banks currently get and it uses it to make Pell grants larger. It uses those funds to focus on innovative efforts to help students not only go to college but to graduate. And just as important, these savings will allow us to make the largest investment ever in the most underappreciated asset in our education system, and that is community colleges like Hudson Valley, which are so essential for the future of our young people. So we hope to improve on this

bill in the Senate and go even further on behalf of students.

Ending this unwarranted subsidy for the big banks is a no-brainer for folks everywhere, except some folks in Washington. In fact, they're already seeing—we're already seeing special interests rallying to save this giveaway. And the large banks—many who have benefited from taxpayer bailouts during the financial crisis—are lobbying to keep this easy money flowing. That's exactly the kind of special-interest effort that has succeeded before, and we can't allow it to succeed this time. This is exactly the kind of waste that leaves people wary of Government, leaves our country straddled with trillions of dollars of deficits and debt with little to show for it. And that's why I went to Washington, to change that kind of stuff. And I look forward to winning this fight in the Senate, just as we won it in the House, and signing this bill into law.

Now, another key to strengthening education, entrepreneurship, and innovation in communities like Troy is to harness the full power of the Internet, and that means faster and more widely available broadband, as well as rules to ensure that we preserve the fairness and openness that led to the flourishing of the Internet in the first place. So today FCC chairman Julius Genachowski is announcing a set of principles to preserve an open Internet in which all Americans can participate and benefit. And I'm pleased that he's taking that step. That's an important role that we can play, laying the ground rules to spur innovation. That's the role of Government, to provide investment that spurs innovation and also to set up commonsense ground rules to ensure that there's a level playing field for all comers who seek to contribute their innovations.

And we have to think about the networks we need today, but also the networks we need tomorrow. That's why I've proposed grants through the National Science Foundation and through the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, or DARPA, which helped develop the Internet, to explore the next communications breakthroughs, whatever they may be. That's why I've appointed the first-ever chief technology officer, charged with looking at ways technology can spur innovations that help Government do a better and more efficient job.

And we also have to strengthen our commitment to research, including basic research, which has been badly neglected for decades. That's always been one of the secrets of America's success: putting more and more money into research to create the next great inventions, the great technologies that will then spur further economic growth.

The fact is, though, basic research doesn't always pay off immediately. It may not pay off for years. When it does, the rewards are often broadly shared, enjoyed by those who bore it costs, but also by those who didn't pay a dime for that basic research.

That's why the private sector generally underinvests in basic science; that's why the public sector must invest instead. While the risks may be large, so are the rewards for our economy and our society. I mean, understand it was basic research in the photoelectric effect that would one day lead to solar panels. It was basic research in physics that would eventually produce the CAT scan. The calculations of today's GPS satellites, they're based on basic research, equations Einstein put on paper more than a century ago. Nobody knew they'd lead to GPS, but they understood that as we advance our knowledge, that is what is going to help advance our societies.

When we fail to invest in research, we fail to invest in the future. Yet since the peak of the space race in the 1960s, our national commitment to research and development has steadily fallen as a share of our national income. And that's why I set a goal of putting a full 3 percent of our Gross Domestic Product, our national income, into research and development, surpassing the commitment we made when President Kennedy challenged this Nation to send a man to the Moon.

Towards this goal, the Recovery Act has helped achieve the largest increase in basic research in history. This month, the National Institutes of Health will award more than a billion dollars in research grants through the Recovery Act focused on what we can learn from the mapping of the human genome in order to treat diseases that affect millions of Americans, from

cancer to heart disease. And I also want to urge Congress to fully fund the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, or DARPA, because since its creation, it has been the source of cutting-edge breakthroughs from that early Internet to stealth technology.

So as we invest in the building blocks of innovation, from the classroom to the laboratory, it's also essential that we have competitive and vibrant markets that promote innovation as well. Education and research help foster new ideas, but it takes fair and free markets to turn those ideas into industries.

My budget finally makes the research and experimentation tax credit permanent. This is a tax credit that helps companies afford the often high costs of developing new ideas, new technologies, new products, which means new jobs. And this tax incentive returns $2 to the economy for every $1 we spend. Time and again, I've heard from leaders, from Silicon Valley to the Tech Valley, about how important it is. I've also proposed reducing to zero the capital gains tax for investments in small or startup businesses, because small businesses are innovative businesses; they produce 13 times more patents per employee than large companies do.

Now, these tax incentives will spur entrepreneurship. But there are other important steps to foster markets that value and promote risk takers and idea makers who've always been the center of our success. That's why it's essential that we enforce trade laws and work with our trading partners to open up markets abroad, that we reform and strengthen our intellectual property system, that we sustain our advantage as a place that draws and welcomes the brightest minds from all over the world, and that we unlock sources of credit and capital which have been in short supply as a result of the financial crisis.

Now, there are some other fundamental barriers to innovation and economic growth that we're going to have to tackle in order to ensure American leadership and prosperity continues into the 21st century. For as a nation, we face enormous challenges, from ending our dependence on foreign oil to finally producing—providing all Americans with quality, affordable health care. We've got to attack these challenges to create a climate for innovation. And innovation can then be an important part of how we meet these challenges.

So let me give you an example: health care costs. They leave our small businesses at a disadvantage when competing with our large businesses, and they leave our large businesses at a disadvantage when competing around the world. We will never know the enormity of the costs of our economy to the countless Americans unable to become entrepreneurs, or to start a small business, to follow their dreams, because they're afraid of losing their health insurance. So to lead in the global economy, we must pass health insurance reform that brings down costs and provides more security for people who have insurance and offers options to people who don't have health insurance. Health insurance reform will be good for business and especially good for small business—especially good for small business.

Now, in the meantime, the recovery plan that we passed earlier this year has begun to modernize our health system. So innovation can also help drive down the cost for everybody. We are taking long-overdue steps to computerize America's health records. And this is going to reduce the waste and errors that cost billions of dollars and thousands of lives, while protecting patients' privacy. And it's important to note, as well, that the records that are held—each of us having our own medical records in digital form holds the potential of offering patients the chance to be more active participants in the prevention and treatment of illness. And health IT, health information technology, if implemented effectively, has the potential to unlock so many unanticipated benefits, because it provides patterns of data that we don't yet collect but could reveal discoveries that we can't predict in terms of how to cure illnesses.

The same thing is true when it comes to energy. No area will need innovation more than in the development of new ways to produce and use and save energy. And you understand that here at Hudson Valley. I firmly believe that the nation that leads the clean energy economy will be the nation that leads the

global economy. And that's why we're doubling our capacity to generate renewable energy, building a stronger and smarter electric grid. And I was meeting some young people who are being trained right here so that they're going to be working on creating this smart grid.

We're investing in technologies to power a new generation of clean energy vehicles. We've helped reach an agreement to raise fuel economy standards. And for the first time in history, we've passed a bill to create a system of clean energy incentives which will help make renewable energy the profitable kind of energy in America, while helping to end our dependence on oil and protect our planet for future generations. This bill has passed the House. We're now working to pass legislation through the Senate. It is time to get this done. We have to lead on energy. We can't be lagging behind.

So that's an overview of our strategy. All these pieces fit together. It's a strategy that's essential for our recovery today, but more importantly, for our prosperity tomorrow. It's a strategy rooted in a deep and abiding faith in the ability of this country to rise to any challenge, because that's our history. We're a people with a seemingly limitless supply of ingenuity and daring and talent. And at its best, our Government has harnessed those qualities without getting in the way.

That's what led to the building of the Erie Canal, which then helped put cities like Troy on the map; that linked east and west and allowed commerce and competition to flow freely between. That's what led a pretty good inventor and a pretty good businessman named Thomas Edison to come to Schenectady and open what is today a thriving mom-and-pop operation known as General Electric.

A former Senator from New York, Robert Kennedy, once told us, "The future is not a gift. It is an achievement." It was not an accident, not a gift, that America led the 20th century. It was the result of hard work and discipline and sacrifice and ambition that served a common purpose. So it must be in the 21st century. Future success is no guarantee. As Americans, we always have to remember that our leadership is not an inheritance, it is a responsibility.

So from biotechnology to nanotechnology, from the development of new forms of energy to research into treatments of ancient diseases, there is so much potential to change our world and improve our lives, while creating countless jobs all across America. The question is if we are ready to embrace that potential, if we're ready to lead the way once more.

I think we're ready. I've seen it all across America. This generation, generation of young people sitting here, they have an unparalleled opportunity. We are called upon to help them seize that opportunity. That's what you're doing here at Hudson Valley Community College. That's what I intend to make sure that we do in Washington. That's what we will do as a nation.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:57 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joeseph R. Biden, Jr., who introduced the President; Mayor Harry J. Tutunjian of Troy, NY; and White House Chief Technology Officer Aneesh Chopra.

Statement on Armenian National Day
September 21, 2009

The people of the United States join the people of Armenia in celebrating Armenia's day of independence today. We deeply value the many cultural and historic ties that bind our two countries. The United States gains strength as a nation from the contributions of so many Americans of Armenian ancestry. We congratulate the people of Armenia on their national day.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Persons Who Commit, Threaten to Commit, or Support Terrorism

September 21, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice, stating that the national emergency with respect to persons who commit, threaten to commit, or support terrorism is to continue in effect beyond September 23, 2009.

The crisis constituted by the grave acts of terrorism and threats of terrorism committed by foreign terrorists, including the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, in New York and Pennsylvania and against the Pentagon, and the continuing and immediate threat of further attacks on United States nationals or the United States that led to the declaration of a national emergency on September 23, 2001, has not been resolved. These actions pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to persons who commit, threaten to commit, or support terrorism, and maintain in force the comprehensive sanctions to respond to this threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
September 21, 2009.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the United Nations Climate Change Summit in New York City

September 22, 2009

Thank you very much. Good morning. I want to thank the Secretary-General for organizing this summit and all the leaders who are participating. That so many of us are here today is a recognition that the threat from climate change is serious, it is urgent, and it is growing. Our generation's response to this challenge will be judged by history, for if we fail to meet it boldly, swiftly, and together, we risk consigning future generations to an irreversible catastrophe.

No nation, however large or small, wealthy or poor, can escape the impact of climate change. Rising sea levels threaten every coastline. More powerful storms and floods threaten every continent. More frequent droughts and crop failures breed hunger and conflict in places where hunger and conflict already thrive. On shrinking islands, families are already being forced to flee their homes as climate refugees. The security and stability of each nation and all peoples—our prosperity, our health, and our safety—are in jeopardy, and the time we have to reverse this tide is running out.

And yet we can reverse it. John F. Kennedy once observed that "our problems are manmade; therefore, they may be solved by man." It is true that for too many years, mankind has been slow to respond or even recognize the magnitude of the climate threat. It is true of my own country as well. We recognize that. But this is a new day. It is a new era, and I am proud to say that the United States has done more to promote clean energy and reduce

carbon pollution in the last 8 months than at any other time in our history.

We are making our Government's largest ever investment in renewable energy, an investment aimed at doubling the generating capacity from wind and other renewable resources in 3 years. Across America, entrepreneurs are constructing wind turbines and solar panels and batteries for hybrid cars with the help of loan guarantees and tax credits, projects that are creating new jobs and new industries. We're investing billions to cut energy waste in our homes, our buildings, and appliances, helping American families save money on energy bills in the process.

We've proposed the very first national policy aimed at both increasing fuel economy and reducing greenhouse gas pollution for all new cars and trucks, a standard that will also save consumers money and our Nation oil. We're moving forward with our Nation's first offshore wind energy projects. We're investing billions to capture carbon pollution so that we can clean up our coal plants. And just this week, we announced that for the first time ever, we'll begin tracking how much greenhouse gas pollution is being emitted throughout the country.

Now, later this week, I will work with my colleagues at the G–20 to phase out fossil fuel subsidies so that we can better address our climate challenge. And already, we know that the recent drop in overall U.S. emissions is due in part to steps that promote greater efficiency and greater use of renewable energy.

Most importantly, the House of Representatives passed an energy and climate bill in June that would finally make clean energy the profitable kind of energy for American businesses and dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions. One committee has already acted on this bill in the Senate, and I look forward to engaging with others as we move forward.

Because no one nation can meet this challenge alone, the United States has also engaged more allies and partners in finding a solution than ever before. In April, we convened the first of what have now been six meetings of the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate here in the United States. In Trinidad, I proposed an energy and climate partnership for the Americas. We've worked through the World Bank to promote renewable energy projects and technologies in the developing world, and we have put climate at the top of our diplomatic agenda when it comes to our relationships with countries as varied as China and Brazil, India and Mexico, from the continent of Africa to the continent of Europe.

Taken together, these steps represent a historic recognition on behalf of the American people and their Government. We understand the gravity of the climate threat. We are determined to act, and we will meet our responsibility to future generations.

But though many of our nations have taken bold action and share in this determination, we did not come here to celebrate progress today. We came because there's so much more progress to be made. We came because there's so much more work to be done.

It is work that will not be easy. As we head towards Copenhagen, there should be no illusions that the hardest part of our journey is in front of us. We seek sweeping but necessary change in the midst of a global recession, where every nation's most immediate priority is reviving their economy and putting their people back to work, and so all of us will face doubts and difficulties in our own capitals as we try to reach a lasting solution to the climate challenge.

But I'm here today to say that difficulty is no excuse for complacency. Unease is no excuse for inaction. And we must not allow the perfect to become the enemy of progress. Each of us must do what we can when we can to grow our economies without endangering our planet, and we must all do it together. We must seize the opportunity to make Copenhagen a significant step forward in the global fight against climate change.

We also cannot allow the old divisions that have characterized the climate debate for so many years to block our progress. Yes, the developed nations that caused much of the damage to our climate over the last century still have a responsibility to lead—and that includes the United States—and we will continue to do so by investing in renewable energy and promoting greater efficiency and slashing our

emissions to reach the targets we set for 2020 and our long-term goal for 2050.

But those rapidly growing developing nations that will produce nearly all the growth in global carbon emissions in the decades ahead must do their part as well. Some of these nations have already made great strides with the development and deployment of clean energy. Still, they need to commit to strong measures at home and agree to stand behind those commitments, just as the developed nations must stand behind their own. We cannot meet this challenge unless all the largest emitters of greenhouse gas pollution act together. There's no other way.

We must also energize our efforts to put other developing nations, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, on a path to sustained growth. These nations do not have the same resources to combat climate change as countries like the United States or China do, but they have the most immediate stake in a solution. For these are the nations that are already living with the unfolding effects of a warming planet: famine, drought, disappearing coastal villages, and the conflicts that arise from scarce resources. Their future is no longer a choice between a growing economy and a cleaner planet, because their survival depends on both. It will do little good to alleviate poverty if you can no longer harvest your crops or find drinkable water.

And that is why we have a responsibility to provide the financial and technical assistance needed to help these nations adapt to the impacts of climate change and pursue low-carbon development.

What we are seeking, after all, is not simply an agreement to limit greenhouse gas emissions. We seek an agreement that will allow all nations to grow and raise living standards without endangering the planet. By developing and disseminating clean technology and sharing our know-how, we can help developing nations leapfrog dirty energy technologies and reduce dangerous emissions.

Mr. Secretary, as we meet here today, the good news is that after too many years of inaction and denial, there's finally widespread recognition of the urgency of the challenge before us. We know what needs to be done. We know that our planet's future depends on a global commitment to permanently reduce greenhouse gas pollution. We know that if we put the right rules and incentives in place, we will unleash the creative power of our best scientists and engineers and entrepreneurs to build a better world. And so many nations have already taken the first step on the journey towards that goal.

But the journey is long, and the journey is hard. And we don't have much time left to make that journey. It's a journey that will require each of us to persevere through setbacks and fight for every inch of progress, even when it comes in fits and starts. So let us begin. For if we are flexible and pragmatic, if we can resolve to work tirelessly in common effort, then we will achieve our common purpose: a world that is safer, cleaner, and healthier than the one we found, and a future that is worthy of our children.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:46 a.m. at United Nations Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority in New York City

September 22, 2009

Please be seated, members of the delegations. I have just concluded frank and productive bilateral meetings with both Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas. And I want to thank them both for appearing here today. I am now looking forward to this opportunity to hold the first meeting among the three of us since we took office.

As I said throughout my campaign and at the beginning of my administration, the United States is committed to a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. That includes a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that results in two states, Israel and Palestine, in which both the Israeli people and the Palestinian people can live in peace and security and realize their aspirations for a better life for their children.

That is why my Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, and my Special Envoy, George Mitchell, have worked tirelessly to create the context for permanent status negotiations. And we have made progress since I took office in January and since Israelis—Israel's Government took office in April, but we still have much further to go.

Palestinians have strengthened their efforts on security, but they need to do more to stop incitement and to move forward with negotiations. Israelis have facilitated greater freedom of movement for the Palestinians and have discussed important steps to restrain settlement activity, but they need to translate these discussions into real action on this and other issues. And it remains important for the Arab States to take concrete steps to promote peace.

Simply put, it is past time to talk about starting negotiations; it is time to move forward. It is time to show the flexibility and common sense and sense of compromise that's necessary to achieve our goals. Permanent status negotiations must begin and begin soon. And more importantly, we must give those negotiations the opportunity to succeed.

And so my message to these two leaders is clear: Despite all the obstacles, despite all the history, despite all the mistrust, we have to find a way forward. We have to summon the will to break the deadlock that has trapped generations of Israelis and Palestinians in an endless cycle of conflict and suffering. We cannot continue the same pattern of taking tentative steps forward and then stepping back. Success depends on all sides acting with a sense of urgency, and that is why I have asked Secretary Clinton and Senator Mitchell to carry forward the work that we do here today.

Senator Mitchell will meet with the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators next week. I've asked the Prime Minister and the President to continue these intensive discussions by sending their teams back to Washington next week, and I've asked the Secretary of State to report to me on the status of these negotiations in mid-October.

All of us know this will not be easy, but we are here today because it is the right thing to do. I look forward to speaking with my colleagues. I'm committed to pressing ahead in the weeks and months and years to come, because it is absolutely critical that we get this issue resolved. It's not just critical for the Israelis and the Palestinians, it's critical for the world. It is in the interests of the United States, and we are going to work as hard as necessary to accomplish our goals. Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:26 p.m. at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Hu Jintao of China in New York City

September 22, 2009

President Obama. We welcome your delegation to New York. I'm sorry that I didn't have a chance to see you in L'Aquila, but your Councilor, Dai, did an excellent job representing your country.

I also have to say that I enjoyed seeing Vice Premier Wang as well as Councilor Dai at the SED meeting. And Vice President Biden and I both had excellent meetings with Chairman Wu 2 weeks ago in the White House. I should also mention that Vice Premier Wang showed me his jump shot, which is excellent. [*Laughter*] How do you say "basketball shot" in Chinese? [*Laughter*]

As you know, I'm committed to pursuing a genuinely cooperative and comprehensive

relationship with China. We need to make our relationship more dynamic and effective, given the growing number of common global and regional challenges that our countries face.

And I'm very much looking forward to my visit to China in November. I want to take cooperation on a range of global and regional and bilateral to a new level, and I appreciate the excellent cooperation that you have already showed to our advance team. So we're very welcome, and I think that will be an excellent visit.

President Hu. Thank you, Mr. President, for your warm and friendly remarks. I'm happy to see that now China-U.S. relationship has shown a sound growth momentum on the whole.

The agreement you and I arrived at, at our London meeting, in a number of areas is being implemented, and our two sides are now working together to build a positive, cooperative, and comprehensive relationship for the 21st century.

I always agree that a good China-U.S. relationship not only serves the fundamental interest of both China and the United States and the two peoples but also contributes to peace, stability, and the prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and in the world at large.

The Chinese side is willing to work with the United States to keep our bilateral relationship firmly along the right course and deepen our pragmatic cooperation in a wide range of areas. The Chinese side is also willing to work with the United States to properly handle sensitive issues to ensure that our relationship will continue to grow on a sound and steady course.

I'd also like to avail myself of this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, for——

[*At this point, the meeting continued, but no transcript was provided.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:47 p.m. at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to State Councilor Dai Bingguo, Vice Premier Wang Qishan, and chairman of the National People's Congress Wu Bangguo of China. The President also referred to the U.S.-China Strategic Economic Dialogue. President Hu spoke in Chinese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the Fifth Annual Meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative in New York City

September 22, 2009

Thank you very much. Please, please have a seat. Thank you. Thank you so much. Good evening. And thank you, President Clinton, for the extraordinarily brief introduction which—[*laughter*]—during the U.N. General Assembly week does not happen that often. [*Laughter*]

I want to acknowledge Bob Harrison and the outstanding work that he's doing as CEO of CGI, as well as Ed Hughes, the deputy director of CGI, for their excellent work.

Some of you are aware that last week, President Clinton and I were here in New York together; we were having lunch in a small Italian restaurant. And we talked about the economy; we talked about health care; we talked about pressing global challenges. And then he said to me, "Would you pass the Parmesan?" [*Laughter*] And then he said to me, "Would you speak to our annual meeting?"

Now, I think everyone knows what it's like when Bill Clinton asks you to make a commitment. [*Laughter*] He looks you in the eye; he feels your pain. [*Laughter*] He makes you feel like you're the only person in the room. What could I say? I was vulnerable, just as all of you have been—[*laughter*]—vulnerable to his charms.

So I am happy to be here and honored by the invitation. And I've always appreciated President Clinton's valuable advice and the ideas that he's offered my administration. I do understand that the President's been having trouble getting ahold of my Secretary of State

lately. [*Laughter*] But I hope he doesn't mind, because Hillary Clinton is doing an outstanding job for this Nation, and we are so proud of her.

I also want to just very briefly take this opportunity to thank President Clinton for his service. In his 8 years in office, he helped swing open the doors of opportunity and prosperity to millions of Americans. And as the first U.S. President to face the full force of globalization, he worked to share that prosperity with people around the world, from promoting trade to expanding education to forging a historic global compact on debt relief.

After a lifetime of service, he would have been forgiven had he settled for a life of quiet, a life of ease, a life of improved golf scores—my understanding is they have not improved that much—[*laughter*]—since he was in office. But he chose a different path. He asked, "What can I do to keep making a difference?"

And what an extraordinary difference he, working with all of you, have made. For the victims of disaster, from the Asian tsunami to Hurricane Katrina, he's made a difference. For those in need, from parents and children battling HIV/AIDS to your efforts today on behalf of the people of Haiti, he's made a difference. It's no exaggeration: Around the world, Bill Clinton has helped to improve and save the lives of millions. That is no exaggeration.

And this week, even as we gather at the United Nations to discuss what governments can do to confront the challenges of our time, even as we've—we're joined tonight by so many extraordinary leaders, Presidents and Prime Ministers—this Global Initiative reminds us of what we can each do as individuals, that you don't have to hold a public office to be a public servant. That's the beauty of service: Anybody can do it, and everyone should try.

To all the CGI members here tonight, I want you to know how grateful I am for your efforts, and I know that those efforts require greater commitment at such difficult economic times. Indeed, your work, and the spirit of service behind it, is deeply personal to me. I've seen it. I've been shaped by it my entire life.

I first saw it in my mother; she was an anthropologist who dedicated her life to understanding and improving the lives of the rural poor, from Indonesia to Pakistan. Whether working with USAID or the Asian Development Bank, the Ford Foundation, Bank Rakyat in Jakarta, or Women's World Banking here in New York, she championed the cause of women's welfare and helped pioneer the microloans that have helped lift millions from poverty.

So my mother understood that whether you live in the foothills of Java or the skyscrapers of Manhattan, we all share common principles: justice and progress, tolerance and the dignity of all human beings. And we all share common aspirations, for ourselves and for our children: to get an education, and to work with dignity, and to live in peace and security.

That's where I first saw that spirit. That's who planted it in me. And I saw this spirit again when I moved to Chicago, working as a community organizer on some of the poorest streets in some of the poorest neighborhoods in the United States. In neighborhoods devastated by steel plant closings, I worked with local churches to help people in need. And change didn't come easy, but with a lot of time and effort, it did come, block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood.

That's when I learned that real progress does not just come from the top down, not just from government; it comes from the bottom up, from people. If you want to bring about change in the world, you can't just be an advocate of somebody else doing it. You can't just preach lofty goals and wait for somebody else to act. You have to step up. You have to serve.

I've seen this spirit of service in my wife Michelle, one of the millions of people whose lives have been touched by AmeriCorps, created by President Clinton. She left her job at a law firm to be the founding director of an AmeriCorps program in Chicago that trains young people for careers in public service. I've seen the transformation that occurs—in their lives, in hers—when people are empowered to live their dreams.

And that's the spirit that's represented here tonight, in the difference that CGI members have made around the world: the greenhouse gases you've cut; the entrepreneurs you've empowered with microloans; all the people—many of them children—you've helped to lead

healthier, more productive lives—more than 200 million in more than 150 countries. That's the meaning of service. That's the difference we can make when we remember our common humanity, or when we embrace our common responsibilities, when we recognize our common destiny.

Your ability to serve people in the disconnected corners of the world reminds us of another truth: We stand at a transformational moment in world history, when our interconnected world presents us at once with great promise, but also with great peril. The very technologies that empower us to create and build also empower those who would destroy and disrupt, the extremists in the mountains of Afghanistan and Pakistan who fuel attacks from New York to London to Bali, from Mombasa to Madrid to Mumbai.

Reckless speculation in any financial sector of the world, or someone's failure to pay a mortgage in Florida can contribute to a global recession that undermines all of us. Poverty in Somalia, or the poppy fields in Afghanistan, the northbound flow of drugs from Colombia, and the southbound flow of American guns and cash into Mexico, all this fuels violence that endangers each and every one of us. And a flu that starts in one country can become a pandemic that sickens millions.

Carbon emissions from cars in Boston and factories in Beijing are melting the ice caps and imperiling the planet. And by the way, we're joined here by the leader who made that particular truth impossible to ignore, former Vice President Al Gore, and we owe a great debt of thanks to him.

These are the threats of the 21st century. These are the challenges we face. And just as no nation can wall itself off from the world, no one nation—no matter how large, no matter how powerful—can meet these challenges alone. Nor can governments alone. Today's threats demand new partnerships across sectors and across societies, creative collaborations to achieve what no one can accomplish alone. In short, we need a new spirit of global partnership. And that is exactly the spirit that guides this organization; I hope that it is the spirit that guides my administration.

Here at home, we've summoned the American people to a new era of service: launching a historic expansion of community service, more than tripling the size of AmeriCorps, creating a new model, an innovation fund to bring together nonprofits, foundations, the private sector, and Government to find the community solutions that work, to fund them and replicate them across America.

Around the world, even as we pursue a new era of engagement with other nations, we're embracing a broader engagement, new partnerships between societies and citizens, community organizations, businesses, faith-based groups.

That's why we've been speaking directly to people around the world, including our friends across the Muslim world, with whom we've launched new beginnings based on mutual interests and mutual respect. It's why you've seen Secretary Clinton in so many countries at town halls, on local television programs, reaching out to citizens and civil society. That's why she's created a new initiative to promote global partnerships between business, nonprofits, and faith groups to promote development.

In fact, this spirit of partnership is a defining feature of our foreign policy. Because Government and the military can work to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat terrorist networks, but while the violent extremists only destroy, we have to make it clear the kind of future that we want to build. That's why we're investing in people's education and health and welfare, as we are doing in Afghanistan and Pakistan. And we need to build new partnerships across regions and religions. And that requires religious leaders and NGOs and citizens to help build the good governance and the transparent institutions and basic services upon which true security depends.

We're making historic investments in clean energy and working towards deep cuts in emissions. But we still need business to unleash new innovations and nonprofits to keep up the pressure to end the threat of climate change.

We're making substantial increases in foreign assistance. But we still need civil society to help host nations deliver aid without

corruption, because foreign assistance is not an end in itself. The purpose of aid must be to create the conditions where it's no longer needed, where we help build the capacity for transformational change in a society.

We're pursuing a comprehensive global health strategy, building on successes in the fight against HIV/AIDS and working to end deaths from malaria and TB and to end polio. But these efforts will only be sustained if we improve the capacity of public health systems to deliver care, especially for mothers and children.

We're making major new investments in food security. But this can't simply be handouts of American food. We need to share new methods and technologies so that countries and communities can become more self-sufficient.

In short, we're renewing development as a key element of American foreign policy, not by lecturing or imposing our ideas, but by listening and working together; by seeking more exchanges between students and experts; new collaborations among scientists to promote technological development; partnerships between businesses, entrepreneurs to advance prosperity and opportunity for people everywhere. That's how we'll confront the challenges of our time. This is how we will seize the promise of this moment in history: standing together, working together, and building together.

It's the spirit I've seen in my travels around the world—in elected leaders and entrepreneurs, the heroic civil society groups, in the students from Ankara to Cairo, from South Bend to Strasbourg—the optimism and the faith and the confidence that we each can make a difference.

And that's the spirit that I see here tonight, the spirit that says we can rise above the barriers that too often divide us—country and culture, color and creed, race and religion and region—that we can come together, and that we can leave this world even better, even more hopeful than we found it.

So to all of you, thank you for your vision, for your engagement, for your stick-to-it-ness. As hard as it may be to sustain during these difficult times, your commitments have never been more needed, they have never been more inspired. And I am grateful to President Clinton for having the vision and leadership to help catalyze this extraordinary collection of individuals and the commitments you make that are making such a difference all around the world.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:15 p.m. at the Sheraton Hotel.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama of Japan in New York City

September 23, 2009

President Obama. Good morning. Well, let me just make a very brief statement.

I want to welcome the new Prime Minister of Japan, Prime Minister Hatoyama. I want to congratulate him for running an extraordinary campaign and his party leading dramatic change in Japan. We've had a very good preliminary discussion about the critical importance of the U.S.-Japanese alliance. It has been a cornerstone of the security of both nations as well as the economic prosperity of both nations for almost 50 years now.

And we pledged that we wanted to strengthen and deepen that relationship. As the world's two largest economies, we recognize the importance of coordinating closely to continue to move beyond the current economic crisis and to focus our attention on how our economies are actually providing opportunity for ordinary citizens. And we also pledged to coordinate very closely together on a range of international threats: everything from nuclear proliferation, the situation in North Korea, how we can help to stabilize Afghanistan and Pakistan, and how we address transnational issues like climate change.

So I've been very impressed with the knowledge and determination of Prime Minister Hatoyama. I know how it feels to have just been elected and form a Government and suddenly

you have to appear at a range of international summits; I went through this 9 months ago. But I'm very confident that not only will the Prime Minister succeed in his efforts and his campaign commitments, but that this will give us an opportunity to strengthen and renew a U.S.-Japan alliance that will be as strong in the 21st century as it was in the latter half of the 20th century.

Prime Minister Hatoyama. Well, President Obama has talked all thing—everything about our meeting, so I have nothing to add to what Mr. President has said. But I told during the meeting to Mr. President that I came across the Pacific Ocean to express my gratitude for President Obama and the American people for the American people to exert courage to select President Obama. And that sentiment came across the Pacific Ocean to Japan, which brought about the change of government in Japan. And I expressed my gratitude for the change and that the American people have—[*inaudible*]—to the Japanese people.

And I told President Obama that the Japan-U.S. alliance will continue to be the central pillar—key pillar of the security of Japan and Japanese foreign policy. And I expressed my ideas of our contributions to the issue of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and my ideas on the issue of North Korea. And we will proceed in dealing with these issues in a cooperative manner.

And on other global issues, like global environment and nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament, I highly approve of President Obama's leadership in courageously—[*inaudible*]—nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament. As the only country that suffered nuclear attacks, we will work together with the United States toward a world without nuclear weapons. And on the issue of climate change I made a speech yesterday, and on this issue, too, we would like to work closely together with the United States. And I confirmed these ideas with President Obama.

President Obama. Thank you so much. Welcome to the United States——

Prime Minister Hatoyama. [*Inaudible*]

President Obama. ——and I look forward to visiting with you again.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:35 a.m. at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. Prime Minister Hatoyama spoke in Japanese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City
September 23, 2009

Good morning. Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, fellow delegates, ladies and gentlemen: It is my honor to address you for the first time as the 44th President of the United States. I come before you humbled by the responsibility that the American people have placed upon me, mindful of the enormous challenges of our moment in history, and determined to act boldly and collectively on behalf of justice and prosperity at home and abroad.

I have been in office for just 9 months, though some days it seems a lot longer. I am well aware of the expectations that accompany my Presidency around the world. And these expectations are not about me. Rather, they are rooted, I believe, in a discontent with a status quo that has allowed us to be increasingly defined by our differences and outpaced by our problems. But they are also rooted in hope, the hope that real change is possible and the hope that America will be a leader in bringing about such change.

I took office at a time when many around the world had come to view America with skepticism and distrust. Now, part of this was due to misperceptions and misinformation about my country. Part of this was due to opposition to specific policies and a belief that on certain critical issues, America had acted unilaterally, without regard for the interests of others. And this has fed an almost reflexive anti-Americanism, which too often has served as an excuse for collective inaction.

Now, like all of you, my responsibility is to act in the interests of my Nation and my

people, and I will never apologize for defending those interests. But it is my deeply held belief that in the year 2009—more than at any point in human history—the interests of nations and peoples are shared. The religious convictions that we hold in our hearts can forge new bonds among people, or they can tear us apart. The technology we harness can light the path to peace, or forever darken it. The energy we use can sustain our planet, or destroy it. What happens to the hope of a single child, anywhere, can enrich our world, or impoverish it.

In this hall, we come from many places, but we share a common future. No longer do we have the luxury of indulging our differences to the exclusion of the work that we must do together. I have carried this message from London to Ankara, from Port of Spain to Moscow, from Accra to Cairo, and it is what I will speak about today, because the time has come for the world to move in a new direction. We must embrace a new era of engagement based on mutual interest and mutual respect, and our work must begin now.

We know the future will be forged by deeds and not simply words. Speeches alone will not solve our problems; it will take persistent action. So for those who question the character and cause of my Nation, I ask you to look at the concrete actions we have taken in just 9 months.

On my first day in office, I prohibited—without exception or equivocation—the use of torture by the United States of America. I ordered the prison at Guantanamo Bay closed, and we are doing the hard work of forging a framework to combat extremism within the rule of law. Every nation must know, America will live its values, and we will lead by example.

We have set a clear and focused goal: to work with all members of this body to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida and its extremist allies, a network that has killed thousands of people of many faiths and nations, and that plotted to blow up this very building. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, we and many nations here are helping these Governments develop the capacity to take the lead in this effort, while working to advance opportunity and security for their people.

In Iraq, we are responsibly ending a war. We have removed American combat brigades from Iraqi cities and set a deadline of next August to remove all our combat brigades from Iraqi territory. And I have made clear that we will help Iraqis transition to full responsibility for their future and keep our commitment to remove all American troops by the end of 2011.

I have outlined a comprehensive agenda to seek the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. In Moscow, the United States and Russia announced that we would pursue substantial reductions in our strategic warheads and launchers. At the Conference on Disarmament, we agreed on a work plan to negotiate an end to the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons. And this week, my Secretary of State will become the first senior American representative to the annual Members Conference of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Upon taking office, I appointed a Special Envoy for Middle East Peace, and America has worked steadily and aggressively to advance the cause of two states, Israel and Palestine, in which peace and security take root and the rights of both Israelis and Palestinians are respected.

To confront climate change, we have invested $80 billion in clean energy. We have substantially increased our fuel-efficiency standards. We have provided new incentives for conservation, launched an energy partnership across the Americas, and moved from a bystander to a leader in international climate negotiations.

To overcome an economic crisis that touches every corner of the world, we worked with the G–20 nations to forge a coordinated international response of over $2 trillion in stimulus to bring the global economy back from the brink. We mobilized resources that helped prevent the crisis from spreading further to developing countries. And we joined with others to launch a $20 billion global food security initiative that will lend a hand to those who need it most and help them build their own capacity.

We've also reengaged the United Nations. We have paid our bills. We have joined the Human Rights Council. We have signed the Convention of the Rights of Persons with

Disabilities. We have fully embraced the Millennium Development Goals. And we address our priorities here, in this institution, for instance, through the Security Council meeting that I will chair tomorrow on nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament and through the issues that I will discuss today.

This is what we have already done, but this is just a beginning. Some of our actions have yielded progress. Some have laid the groundwork for progress in the future. But make no mistake: This cannot solely be America's endeavor. Those who used to chastise America for acting alone in the world cannot now stand by and wait for America to solve the world's problems alone. We have sought—in word and deed—a new era of engagement with the world. And now is the time for all of us to take our share of responsibility for a global response to global challenges.

Now, if we are honest with ourselves, we need to admit that we are not living up to that responsibility. Consider the course that we're on if we fail to confront the status quo: extremists sowing terror in pockets of the world, protracted conflicts that grind on and on, genocide, mass atrocities, more nations with nuclear weapons, melting ice caps and ravaged populations, persistent poverty and pandemic disease. I say this not to sow fear, but to state a fact: The magnitude of our challenges has yet to be met by the measure of our actions.

Now, this body was founded on the belief that the nations of the world could solve their problems together. Franklin Roosevelt, who died before he could see his vision for this institution become a reality, put it this way, and I quote: "The structure of world peace cannot be the work of one man, or one party, or one nation. It cannot be a peace of large nations, or of small nations. It must be a peace which rests on the cooperative effort of the whole world."

The cooperative effort of the whole world; those words ring even more true today, when it is not simply peace, but our very health and prosperity that we hold in common. Yet we also know that this body is made up of sovereign states. And sadly, but not surprisingly, this body has often become a forum for sowing discord instead of forging common ground, a venue for playing politics and exploiting grievances rather than solving problems. After all, it is easy to walk up to this podium and point figures—point fingers and stoke divisions. Nothing is easier than blaming others for our troubles and absolving ourselves of responsibility for our choices and our actions. Anybody can do that. Responsibility and leadership in the 21st century demand more.

In an era when our destiny is shared, power is no longer a zero-sum game. No one nation can or should try to dominate another nation. No world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will succeed. No balance of power among nations will hold. The traditional divisions between nations of the south and the north make no sense in an interconnected world; nor do alignments of nations rooted in the cleavages of a long-gone cold war.

The time has come to realize that the old habits, the old arguments, are irrelevant to the challenges faced by our people. They lead nations to act in opposition to the very goals that they claim to pursue and to vote—often in this body—against the interests of their own people. They build up walls between us and the future that our people seek, and the time has come for those walls to come down. Together, we must build new coalitions that bridge old divides, coalitions of different faiths and creeds, of north and south, east, west, Black, White, and Brown.

The choice is ours. We can be remembered as a generation that chose to drag the arguments of the 20th century into the 21st, that put off hard choices, refused to look ahead, failed to keep pace because we defined ourselves by what we were against instead of what we were for. Or we can be a generation that chooses to see the shoreline beyond the rough waters ahead, that comes together to serve the common interests of human beings, and finally gives meaning to the promise embedded in the name given to this institution: the United Nations.

That is the future America wants, a future of peace and prosperity that we can only reach if we recognize that all nations have rights, but

all nations have responsibilities as well. That is the bargain that makes this work. That must be the guiding principle of international cooperation.

Today let me put forward four pillars that I believe are fundamental to the future that we want for our children: nonproliferation and disarmament, the promotion of peace and security, the preservation of our planet, and a global economy that advances opportunity for all people.

First, we must stop the spread of nuclear weapons, and seek the goal of a world without them. This institution was founded at the dawn of the atomic age, in part because man's capacity to kill had to be contained. For decades, we averted disaster, even under the shadow of a superpower standoff. But today, the threat of proliferation is growing in scope and complexity. If we fail to act, we will invite nuclear arms races in every region and the prospect of wars and acts of terror on a scale that we can hardly imagine.

A fragile consensus stands in the way of this frightening outcome, and that is the basic bargain that shapes the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It says that all nations have the right to peaceful nuclear energy, that nations with nuclear weapons have a responsibility to move toward disarmament, and those without them have the responsibility to forsake them. The next 12 months could be pivotal in determining whether this compact will be strengthened or will slowly dissolve.

America intends to keep our end of the bargain. We will pursue a new agreement with Russia to substantially reduce our strategic warheads and launchers. We will move forward with ratification of the Test Ban Treaty and work with others to bring the treaty into force so that nuclear testing is permanently prohibited. We will complete a Nuclear Posture Review that opens the door to deeper cuts and reduces the role of nuclear weapons. And we will call upon countries to begin negotiations in January on a treaty to end the production of fissile material for weapons.

I will also host a summit next April that reaffirms each nation's responsibility to secure nuclear material on its territory and to help those who can't, because we must never allow a single nuclear device to fall into the hands of a violent extremist. And we will work to strengthen the institutions and initiatives that combat nuclear smuggling and theft.

All of this must support efforts to strengthen the NPT. Those nations that refuse to live up to their obligations must face consequences. Let me be clear: This is not about singling out individual nations; it is about standing up for the rights of all nations that do live up to their responsibilities. Because a world in which IAEA inspections are avoided and the United Nation's demands are ignored will leave all people less safe and all nations less secure.

In their actions to date, the Governments of North Korea and Iran threaten to take us down this dangerous slope. We respect their rights as members of the community of nations. I have said before, and I will repeat, I am committed to diplomacy that opens a path to greater prosperity and more secure peace for both nations if they live up to their obligations.

But if the Governments of Iran and North Korea choose to ignore international standards, if they put the pursuit of nuclear weapons ahead of regional stability and the security and opportunity of their own people, if they are oblivious to the dangers of escalating nuclear arms races in both East Asia and the Middle East, then they must be held accountable. The world must stand together to demonstrate that international law is not an empty promise and that treaties will be enforced. We must insist that the future does not belong to fear.

Now, that brings me to the second pillar for our future: the pursuit of peace. The United Nations was born of the belief that the people of the world can live their lives, raise their families, and resolve their differences peacefully. And yet we know that in too many parts of the world, this ideal remains an abstraction, a distant dream. We can either accept that outcome as inevitable and tolerate constant and crippling conflict, or we can recognize that the yearning for peace is universal and reassert our resolve to end conflicts around the world.

That effort must begin with an unshakeable determination that the murder of innocent men, women, and children will never be

tolerated. On this, no one can be—there can be no dispute. The violent extremists who promote conflict by distorting faith have discredited and isolated themselves. They offer nothing but hatred and destruction. In confronting them, America will forge lasting partnerships to target terrorists, share intelligence, and coordinate law enforcement and protect our people. We will permit no safe haven for Al Qaida to launch attacks from Afghanistan or any other nation. We will stand by our friends on the frontlines, as we and many nations will do in pledging support for the Pakistani people tomorrow. And we will pursue positive engagement that builds bridges among faiths and new partnerships for opportunity.

Our efforts to promote peace, however, cannot be limited to defeating violent extremists. For the most powerful weapon in our arsenal is the hope of human beings, the belief that the future belongs to those who would build and not destroy, the confidence that conflicts can end and a new day can begin.

And that is why we will support—we will strengthen our support for effective peacekeeping, while energizing our efforts to prevent conflicts before they take hold. We will pursue a lasting peace in Sudan through support for the people of Darfur and the implementation of the comprehensive peace agreement, so that we secure the peace that the Sudanese people deserve. And in countries ravaged by violence, from Haiti to Congo to East Timor, we will work with the U.N. and other partners to support an enduring peace.

I will also continue to seek a just and lasting peace between Israel, Palestine, and the Arab world. We will continue to work on that issue. Yesterday I had a constructive meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas. We have made some progress. Palestinians have strengthened their efforts on security. Israelis have facilitated greater freedom of movement for the Palestinians. As a result of these efforts on both sides, the economy in the West Bank has begun to grow. But more progress is needed. We continue to call on Palestinians to end incitement against Israel, and we continue to emphasize that America does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements.

The time has come to relaunch negotiations—without preconditions—that address the permanent status issues: security for Israelis and Palestinians, borders, refugees, and Jerusalem. And the goal is clear: Two states living side by side in peace and security; a Jewish State of Israel, with true security for all Israelis; and a viable, independent Palestinian state, with contiguous territory that ends the occupation that began in 1967 and realizes the potential of the Palestinian people.

As we pursue this goal, we will also pursue peace between Israel and Lebanon, Israel and Syria, and a broader peace between Israel and its many neighbors. In pursuit of that goal, we will develop regional initiatives with multilateral participation, alongside bilateral negotiations.

Now, I am not naive. I know this will be difficult. But all of us—not just the Israelis and the Palestinians, but all of us—must decide whether we are serious about peace, or whether we will only lend it lip service. To break the old patterns, to break the cycle of insecurity and despair, all of us must say publicly what we would acknowledge in private. The United States does Israel no favors when we fail to couple an unwavering commitment to its security with an insistence that Israel respect the legitimate claims and rights of the Palestinians. And nations within this body do the Palestinians no favors when they choose vitriolic attacks against Israel over constructive willingness to recognize Israel's legitimacy and its right to exist in peace and security.

We must remember that the greatest price of this conflict is not paid by us. It's not paid by politicians. It's paid by the Israeli girl in Sderot who closes her eyes in fear that a rocket will take her life in the middle of the night. It's paid for by the Palestinian boy in Gaza who has no clean water and no country to call his own. These are all God's children. And after all the politics and all the posturing, this is about the right of every human being to live with dignity and security. That is a lesson embedded in the three great faiths that call one small slice of Earth the Holy Land. And that is

why, even though there will be setbacks and false starts and tough days, I will not waver in my pursuit of peace.

Third, we must recognize that in the 21st century, there will be no peace unless we take responsibility for the preservation of our planet. And I thank the Secretary-General for hosting the subject of climate change yesterday.

The danger posed by climate change cannot be denied. Our responsibility to meet it must not be deferred. If we continue down our current course, every member of this Assembly will see irreversible changes within their borders. Our efforts to end conflicts will be eclipsed by wars over refugees and resources. Development will be devastated by drought and famine. Land that human beings have lived on for millennia will disappear. Future generations will look back and wonder why we refused to act, why we failed to pass on an environment that was worthy of our inheritance.

And that is why the days when America dragged its feet on this issue are over. We will move forward with investments to transform our energy economy, while providing incentives to make clean energy the profitable kind of energy. We will press ahead with deep cuts in emissions to reach the goals that we set for 2020 and, eventually, 2050. We will continue to promote renewable energy and efficiency and share new technologies with countries around the world. And we will seize every opportunity for progress to address this threat in a cooperative effort with the entire world.

And those wealthy nations that did so much damage to the environment in the 20th century must accept our obligation to lead. But responsibility does not end there. While we must acknowledge the need for differentiated responses, any effort to curb carbon emissions must include the fast-growing carbon emitters who can do more to reduce their air pollution without inhibiting growth. And any effort that fails to help the poorest nations both adapt to the problems that climate change have already wrought and help them travel a path of clean development simply will not work.

It's hard to change something as fundamental as how we use energy. I know that. It's even harder to do so in the midst of a global recession. Certainly, it will be tempting to sit back and wait for others to move first. But we cannot make this journey unless we all move forward together. As we head into Copenhagen, let us resolve to focus on what each of us can do for the sake of our common future.

And this leads me to the final pillar that must fortify our future: a global economy that advances opportunity for all people. The world is still recovering from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. In America, we see the engine of growth beginning to churn, and yet many still struggle to find a job or pay their bills. Across the globe, we find promising signs, but little certainty about what lies ahead. And far too many people in far too many places live through the daily crises that challenge our humanity: the despair of an empty stomach, the thirst brought on by dwindling water supplies, the injustice of a child dying from a treatable disease or a mother losing her life as she gives birth.

In Pittsburgh, we will work with the world's largest economies to chart a course for growth that is balanced and sustained. That means vigilance to ensure that we do not let up until our people are back to work. That means taking steps to rekindle demand so that global recovery can be sustained. And that means setting new rules of the road and strengthening regulation for all financial centers, so that we put an end to the greed and the excess and the abuse that led us into this disaster, and prevent a crisis like this from ever happening again.

At a time of such interdependence, we have a moral and pragmatic interest, however, in broader questions of development, the questions of development that existed even before this crisis happened. And so America will continue our historic effort to help people feed themselves. We have set aside $63 billion to carry forward the fight against HIV/AIDS, to end deaths from tuberculosis and malaria, to eradicate polio, and to strengthen public health systems. We are joining with other countries to contribute H1N1 vaccines to the World Health Organization. We will integrate more economies into a system of global trade. We will support the Millennium Development Goals and approach next year's summit with a global plan

to make them a reality. And we will set our sights on the eradication of extreme poverty in our time.

Now is the time for all of us to do our part. Growth will not be sustained or shared unless all nations embrace their responsibilities. And that means that wealthy nations must open their markets to more goods and extend a hand to those with less, while reforming international institutions to give more nations a greater voice. And developing nations must root out the corruption that is an obstacle to progress, for opportunity cannot thrive where individuals are oppressed and business have to pay bribes. That is why we support honest police and independent judges, civil society and a vibrant private sector. Our goal is simple: a global economy in which growth is sustained and opportunity is available to all.

Now, the changes that I've spoken about today will not be easy to make. And they will not be realized simply by leaders like us coming together in forums like this, as useful as that may be. For as in any assembly of members, real change can only come through the people we represent. That is why we must do the hard work to lay the groundwork for progress in our own capitals. That's where we will build the consensus to end conflicts and to harness technology for peaceful purposes, to change the way we use energy, and to promote growth that can be sustained and shared.

I believe that the people of the world want this future for their children. And that is why we must champion those principles which ensure that governments reflect the will of the people. These principles cannot be afterthoughts. Democracy and human rights are essential to achieving each of the goals that I've discussed today, because governments of the people and by the people are more likely to act in the broader interests of their own people, rather than narrow interests of those in power.

The test of our leadership will not be the degree to which we feed the fears and old hatreds of our people. True leadership will not be measured by the ability to muzzle dissent, or to intimidate and harass political opponents at home. The people of the world want change. They will not long tolerate those who are on the wrong side of history.

This Assembly's Charter commits each of us, and I quote, "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women." Among those rights is the freedom to speak your mind and worship as you please; the promise of equality of the races, and the opportunity for women and girls to pursue their own potential; the ability of citizens to have a say in how you are governed and to have confidence in the administration of justice, for just as no nation should be forced to accept the tyranny of another nation, no individual should be forced to accept the tyranny of their own people.

As an African American, I will never forget that I would not be here today without the steady pursuit of a more perfect union in my country. And that guides my belief that no matter how dark the day may seem, transformative change can be forged by those who choose to side with justice. And I pledge that America will always stand with those who stand up for their dignity and their rights: for the student who seeks to learn; the voter who demands to be heard; the innocent who longs to be free; the oppressed who yearns to be equal.

Democracy cannot be imposed on any nation from the outside. Each society must search for its own path, and no path is perfect. Each country will pursue a path rooted in the culture of its people and in its past traditions. And I admit that America has too often been selective in its promotion of democracy. But that does not weaken our commitment; it only reinforces it. There are basic principles that are universal; there are certain truths which are self-evident. And the United States of America will never waver in our efforts to stand up for the right of people everywhere to determine their own destiny.

Sixty-five years ago, a weary Franklin Roosevelt spoke to the American people in his fourth and final Inaugural Address. After years of war, he sought to sum up the lessons that could be drawn from the terrible suffering, the enormous sacrifice that had taken place. "We

have learned," he said, "to be citizens of the world, members of the human community."

The United Nations was built by men and women like Roosevelt from every corner of the world: from Africa and Asia, from Europe to the Americas. These architects of international cooperation had an idealism that was anything but naive; it was rooted in the hard-earned lessons of war, rooted in the wisdom that nations could advance their interests by acting together instead of splitting apart.

Now it falls to us, for this institution will be what we make of it. The United Nations does extraordinary good around the world: feeding the hungry; caring for the sick; mending places that have been broken. But it also struggles to enforce its will and to live up to the ideals of its founding.

I believe that those imperfections are not a reason to walk away from this institution; they are a calling to redouble our efforts. The United Nations can either be a place where we bicker about outdated grievances, or forge common ground; a place where we focus on what drives us apart, or what brings us together; a place where we indulge tyranny, or a source of moral authority. In short, the United Nations can be an institution that is disconnected from what matters in the lives of our citizens, or it can be an indispensable factor in advancing the interests of the people we serve.

We have reached a pivotal moment. The United States stands ready to begin a new chapter of international cooperation, one that recognizes the rights and responsibilities of all nations. And so, with confidence in our cause and with a commitment to our values, we call on all nations to join us in building the future that our people so richly deserve.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 a.m. in the General Assembly Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Ali Abdussalam Treki, President, 64th session of the U.N. General Assembly; Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations; Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; and President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority.

Remarks at a Luncheon Hosted by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations in New York City

September 23, 2009

Well, thank you very much, Mr. Secretary-General. On behalf of the United States and on behalf of the extraordinary city of New York, we want to welcome all of you. We also want to encourage you to do some shopping while you're here. [*Laughter*] There are wonderful restaurants.

I've talked enough this morning, so I'm going to be very, very brief. But, Mr. Secretary-General, I just wanted to thank you for your unwavering commitment to the ideals upon which this body was founded. In your tenure at the United Nations, you've shown your dedication to the pursuit of peace and security, to protection of human rights, the promotion of democracy and development, and the advancement of international justice.

Over the past year, your leadership has directly helped to prevent the use and spread of nuclear weapons. It's improved this institution's peacekeeping efforts, to battle hunger and increase food security, and as we saw yesterday, you are reminding all the world of the urgency and magnitude of our climate challenge. And on this effort, you've led by example and spurred all of us on towards the common goal of saving our common home. And we're very grateful to you for that.

The institution that you lead was founded decades ago in a different world that faced different threats and different challenges. And yet the size and the scope of the challenges we currently face are immense. And the United Nations has never held more promise than it does today. Whether we realize that promise is far

from certain. As I said this morning, the magnitude of our challenges has yet to be met by the scope of our action. But days like this offer renewed hope that we will find it within ourselves the courage and the determination to meet our responsibilities to ourselves, to our citizens, and to future generations.

It falls to us. Progress will not come without setbacks. Cooperation does not come without debate and disagreement. And this institution will be what we make of it. So on this September day, I would like to offer a toast to what can be in the years to come, a place where we forge common ground and recognize our common humanity, a source of moral authority, a force of peace, and above all, an indispensible institution in helping all of us build a better future for our children and our grandchildren.

To the United Nations. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. at United Nations Headquarters.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia and an Exchange With Reporters in New York City
September 23, 2009

President Obama. Well, first of all, I want to welcome President Medvedev to the United States and New York. As you all know, I had the great pleasure of visiting him in Moscow, and he extended extraordinary hospitality to both myself and my family. More importantly, we got a lot of work done that I think will be bearing fruit in the months and years to come.

And I have to say publicly how much I appreciate the excellent working relationship that President Medvedev and I have been able to develop during our meetings, not only bilaterally, but also at the various summits that we've attended.

We've had an excellent discussion that touched on a number of areas that our teams have been working on together over the last several months. In particular, we discussed the progress that's being made on the START Treaty. And both of us are confident that we can meet our self-imposed deadline to get an agreement that substantially reduces our nuclear missiles and launchers by the end of the year.

So we spent the bulk of our time talking about Iran. As I said in my speech today, the United States is committed to a strong nonproliferation regime. And we are committed to upholding the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty that strikes a bargain with all countries. That bargain says that countries are able to pursue peaceful nuclear technology, that they commit not to pursuing nuclear weapons, and those nations that have nuclear weapons make commitments to start reducing their stockpiles.

As the two major nuclear superpowers, we have made a commitment that we will reduce our nuclear stockpiles and move forward on our part of the bargain. And many other countries are abiding by the international commitments and norms that have been established by the NPT.

Unfortunately, Iran has been violating too many of its international commitments. So what we've discussed is how we can move in a positive direction that resolves a potential crisis, not just in the Middle East but that can cause enormous problems to the nonproliferation regime worldwide.

I believe that Russia and the United States shares the strategic objective that Iran can pursue peaceful energy sources but that it should not pursue nuclear weapons. I believe we also share the view that this should be resolved diplomatically, and I am on record as being committed to negotiating with Iran in a serious fashion to resolve this issue.

Russia, as a major leader, I think, believes that such an approach is possible as well. But I think we also both agree that if Iran does not respond to serious negotiations and resolve this issue in a way that assures the international community that it's meeting its commitments and is not developing nuclear weapons, then we will have to take additional actions

and that sanctions, serious additional sanctions, remain a possibility.

We have an opportunity for a P–5-plus-1 meeting with Iran in October. I hope that Iran seizes the opportunity to follow the path that both the United States and Russia would prefer in making a decision to live up to its international commitments, abandon nuclear weapons, and to fully join the international community in a way that, I think, will ultimately enhance the peace of the region and the prosperity of the Iranian people.

And once again, I just want to personally thank President Medvedev, but also the Russian people, for the leadership that they're showing on the world stage. I'm confident that when the United States and Russia work on critical issues like nuclear nonproliferation that the world rallies behind us and that we will be able to bring about the kind of international peace and security that I think we all want.

President Medvedev. I'll try to make my comment briefer because, unlike my colleague, President Barack Obama, I still have to deliver my statement from the United Nations rostrum.

I agree that, indeed, recently we have witnessed very positive changes in our relations, with established, constructive, friendly working relations that allow us to tackle difficult issues that not only the two countries face, but also the entire world.

Today we've discussed a range of issues. Mr. President listed them. Indeed, we communicate on regular basis. We personally meet quarterly, and we talk on the phone regularly. So those personal contacts are not an exotic prank, but rather a manifestation of good working relations.

Indeed, we discussed new START Treaty. We are satisfied with the current pace of work. The teams that were tasked to work on this matter work very successfully. We're satisfied with the work. We believe that they will be able to stick to the time schedule and that in due time we will have every—[*inaudible*].

We talked about missile defense with my colleague, President Obama. We talked that the decision that he took was reasonable and that reflected the position of the current U.S. administration on missile defense and also takes into consideration our concerns on the missile defense which is needed for Europe and for the world. And we are ready to continue this work with our U.S. colleagues in this direction, as well as with our European colleagues, of course.

We also discussed other issues. We have devoted lots of our time to the Iranian problem my colleague, Mr. President, rightly mentioned. Our task is to create such a system of incentives that would allow Iran to resolve its fissile nuclear program, but at the same time prevent it from obtaining nuclear weapons. That's why we, as responsible members of international community and, indeed, two nuclear superpowers, should send great signals in that direction.

I told His Excellency, Mr. President, that we believe we need to help Iran to take a right decision. As to also have sanctions, Russia's belief is very simple, and I stated it recently. Sanctions rarely lead to productive results. But in some cases sanctions are inevitable.

Finally, it is a matter of choice. And we're prepared to continue and to work together with the U.S. administration both on Iranian peaceful program and on other matters.

Most importantly, we've learned to listen to each other once again. And that is of great importance both to the future of relations of the two countries and the two peoples. That is why I would like to give special thanks to you, Barack, for your cooperation on these matters.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

The President's Remarks at the United Nations

Q. What's been the response to your speech?

President Obama. You know, I've been in too many meetings. I don't know. But I'm looking for your review, Jake [Jake Tapper, ABC News].

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:26 p.m. at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. President Medvedev spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the United Nations Security Council Summit on Nonproliferation and Nuclear Disarmament in New York City

September 24, 2009

The 6191st meeting of the Security Council is called to order. The provisional agenda for this meeting is before the Council in document S/Agenda/6191, which reads, quote, "Maintenance of international peace and security, nuclear proliferation, and nuclear disarmament." Unless I hear any objection, I shall consider the agenda adopted. Agenda is adopted.

I wish to warmly welcome the distinguished heads of state and Government, the Generals—the Secretary-General, the Director General of the IAEA, ministers, and other distinguished representatives present in the Security Council chamber. Your presence is an affirmation of the importance of the subject matter to be discussed.

The Security Council summit will now begin its consideration of item two of the agenda. Members of the Council have before them document S/2009/473, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations. I wish to draw Council members' attention to document S/2009/463 containing a letter dated 16 September 2009 from the United States of America transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration. In accordance with the understanding reached earlier among members, the Security Council will take action on the draft resolution before it prior to hearing statements from the Secretary-General and Council members. Accordingly, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now. Will those in favor of the draft resolution contained in document S/2009/473 please raise their hand? The results of the voting is as follows: The draft resolution is received unanimously, 15 votes in favor. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as Resolution 1887 of 2009.

I want to thank again everybody who is in attendance. I wish you all good morning. In the six-plus decades that this Security Council has been in existence, only four other meetings of this nature have been convened. I called for this one so that we may address at the highest level a fundamental threat to the security of all peoples and all nations: the spread and use of nuclear weapons.

As I said yesterday, this very institution was founded at the dawn of the atomic age, in part because man's capacity to kill had to be contained. And although we averted a nuclear nightmare during the cold war, we now face proliferation of a scope and complexity that demands new strategies and new approaches. Just one nuclear weapon exploded in a city, be it New York or Moscow, Tokyo or Beijing, London or Paris, could kill hundreds of thousands of people, and it would badly destabilize our security, our economies, and our very way of life.

Once more, the United Nations has a pivotal role to play in preventing this crisis. The historic resolution we just adopted enshrines our shared commitment to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons, and it brings Security Council agreement on a broad framework for action to reduce nuclear dangers as we work toward that goal. It reflects the agenda I outlined in Prague and builds on a consensus that all nations have the right to peaceful nuclear energy, that nations with nuclear weapons have the responsibility to move toward disarmament and those without them have the responsibility to forsake them.

Today the Security Council endorsed a global effort to lock down all vulnerable nuclear materials within 4 years. The United States will host a summit next April to advance this goal and help all nations achieve it. This resolution will also help strengthen the institutions and initiatives that combat the smuggling, financing, and theft of proliferation-related materials. It calls on all states to freeze any financial assets that are being used for proliferation. And it calls for stronger safeguards to reduce the likelihood that peaceful nuclear weapons programs can be diverted to a weapons program—that peaceful nuclear programs can be diverted to a weapons program.

The resolution we passed today will also strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We have made it clear that the Security Council has both the authority and the responsibility to respond to violations to this treaty. We've made it clear that the Security Council has both the authority and responsibility to determine and respond as necessary when violations of this treaty threaten international peace and security.

That includes full compliance with Security Council resolutions on Iran and North Korea. Let me be clear: This is not about singling out individual nations; it is about standing up for the rights of all nations who do live up to their responsibilities. The world must stand together, and we must demonstrate that international law is not an empty promise and that treaties will be enforced.

The next 12 months will be absolutely critical in determining whether this resolution and our overall efforts to stop the spread and use of nuclear weapons are successful. And all nations must do their part to make this work. In America, I have promised that we will pursue a new agreement with Russia to substantially reduce our strategic warheads and launchers. We will move forward with the ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and open the door to deeper cuts in our own arsenal. In January, we will call upon countries to begin negotiations on a treaty to end the production of fissile material for weapons. And the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in May will strengthen that agreement.

Now, we harbor no illusions about the difficulty of bringing about a world without nuclear weapons. We know there are plenty of cynics and that there will be setbacks to prove their point. But there will also be days like today that push us forward, days that tell a different story. It is the story of a world that understands that no difference or division is worth destroying all that we have built and all that we love. It is a recognition that can bring people of different nationalities and ethnicities and ideologies together. In my own country, it has brought Democrats and Republican leaders together, leaders like George Shultz, Bill Perry, Henry Kissinger, and Sam Nunn, who are with us here today.

And it was a Republican President, Ronald Reagan, who once articulated the goal we now seek in the starkest of terms. I quote: "A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. And no matter how great the obstacles may seem, we must never stop our efforts to reduce the weapons of war. We must never stop until all—we must never stop at all until we see the day when nuclear arms have been banished from the face of the Earth." That is our task. That can be our destiny. And we will leave this meeting with a renewed determination to achieve this shared goal. Thank you.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than 5 minutes in order to enable the Council to carry on its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the text in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the chamber.

I shall now invite the distinguished Secretary-General, His Excellency Ban Ki-moon, to take the floor.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:36 a.m. at United Nations Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Director General Mohamed El-Baradei of the International Atomic Energy Agency; former Secretaries of State George P. Shultz and Henry Kissinger; former Secretary of Defense William J. Perry; and former Sen. Samuel A. Nunn.

Statement on the Appointment of Paul G. Kirk, Jr., as a United States Senator for Massachusetts
September 24, 2009

I am pleased that Massachusetts will have its full representation in the United States Senate in the coming months as important issues such as health care, financial reform, and energy will be debated. Paul Kirk is a distinguished leader, whose long collaboration with Senator Kennedy makes him an excellent interim choice to carry on his work until the voters make their choice in January.

Remarks With President Nicolas Sarkozy of France and Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
September 25, 2009

Iranian Nuclear Program

President Obama. Good morning. We are here to announce that yesterday in Vienna, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France presented detailed evidence to the IAEA demonstrating that the Islamic Republic of Iran has been building a covert uranium enrichment facility near Qom for several years.

Earlier this week, the Iranian Government presented a letter to the IAEA that made reference to a new enrichment facility, years after they had started its construction. The existence of this facility underscores Iran's continuing unwillingness to meet its obligations under U.N. Security Council resolutions and IAEA requirements. We expect the IAEA to immediately investigate this disturbing information and to report to the IAEA Board of Governors.

Now, Iran's decision to build yet another nuclear facility without notifying the IAEA represents a direct challenge to the basic compact at the center of the nonproliferation regime. These rules are clear: All nations have the right to peaceful nuclear energy; those nations with nuclear weapons must move towards disarmament; those nations without nuclear weapons must forsake them. That compact has largely held for decades, keeping the world far safer and more secure. And that compact depends on all nations living up to their responsibilities.

This site deepens a growing concern that Iran is refusing to live up to those international responsibilities, including specifically revealing all nuclear-related activities. As the international community knows, this is not the first time that Iran has concealed information about its nuclear program. Iran has a right to peaceful nuclear power that meets the energy needs of its people, but the size and configuration of this facility is inconsistent with a peaceful program. Iran is breaking rules that all nations must follow, endangering the global nonproliferation regime, denying its own people access to the opportunity they deserve, and threatening the stability and security of the region and the world.

It is time for Iran to act immediately to restore the confidence of the international community by fulfilling its international obligations. We remain committed to serious, meaningful engagement with Iran to address the nuclear issue through the P–5-plus-1 negotiations. Through this dialogue, we are committed to demonstrating that international law is not an empty promise, that obligations must be kept, and that treaties will be enforced.

And that's why there's a sense of urgency about the upcoming meeting on October 1st between Iran, the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, and Germany. At that meeting, Iran must be prepared to cooperate fully and comprehensively with the IAEA to take concrete steps to create confidence and transparency in its nuclear program and to demonstrate that it is committed to establishing its peaceful intentions through meaningful dialogue and concrete actions.

To put it simply: Iran must comply with U.N. Security Council resolutions and make clear it is willing to meet its responsibilities as a member of the community of nations. We have offered Iran a clear path toward greater international integration if it lives up to its obligations, and that offer stands. But the Iranian Government must now demonstrate through deeds its peaceful intentions, or be held accountable to international standards and international law.

I should point out that although the United Kingdom, France, and the United States made the presentation to Vienna, that Germany, a member of the P–5-plus-1, and Chancellor Merkel in particular, who could not be here this morning, wished to associate herself with these remarks.

I would now like to turn to President Sarkozy of France for a brief statement.

[A*t this point, President Sarkozy began his remarks in French, and no translation was provided. A translation began while his remarks were in progress, as follows.*]

President Sarkozy. ——to offer a negotiated solution to the Iranian leaders without any success, which what has been revealed today is exceptional. Following the enriching plant of Natanz in 2002, it is now the Qom one which is revealed. It was designed and built over the past several years in direct violation of resolutions from the Security Council and from the IAEA. I am expecting from the IAEA an exhaustive, strict, and rigorous investigation, as President Obama just said.

We were already in a very severe confidence crisis. We are now faced with a challenge, a challenge made to the entire international communities. The six will meet with the Iranian representatives in Geneva. Everything—everything must be put on the table now.

We cannot let the Iranian leaders gain time while the motors are running. If by December there is not an in-depth change by the Iranian leaders, sanctions will have to be taken. This is for the peace and stability. Thank you.

Prime Minister Brown. America, the United Kingdom, and France are at one. Iran's nuclear program is the most urgent proliferation challenge that the world faces today.

As President Obama and President Sarkozy have just said, the level of deception by the Iranian Government and the scale of what we believe is the breach of international commitments will shock and anger the whole international community, and it will harden our resolve.

Confronted by the serial deception of many years, the international community has no choice today but to draw a line in the sand. On October the 1st, Iran must now engage with the international community and join the international community as a partner. If it does not do so, it will be further isolated.

And I say on behalf of the United Kingdom today, we will not let this matter rest. And we are prepared to implement further and more stringent sanctions. Let the message that goes out to the world be absolutely clear that Iran must abandon any military ambitions for its nuclear program. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:43 a.m. at the Pittsburgh Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany.

The President's News Conference in Pittsburgh
September 25, 2009

The President. Good afternoon. Let me, first of all, thank Mayor Luke Ravenstahl, County Executive Dan Onorato, and the people of Pittsburgh for being just extraordinary hosts. Last night, during the dinner that I had with world leaders, so many of them commented on the fact that sometime in the past, they had been to Pittsburgh—in some cases, it was 20 or 25 or 30 years ago—and coming back, they were so impressed with the revitalization of the city. A number of them remarked on the fact that it pointed to lessons that they could take away in revitalizing manufacturing towns in their home countries. The people here have

been just extraordinary, and so I want to thank all of you for the great hospitality.

I will tell you, I'm a little resentful because I did not get to Pamela's Diner for pancakes. [*Laughter*] Although, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama of Japan did get pancakes, and I don't know how he worked that, but he was raving about them.

Six months ago, I said that the London summit marked a turning point in the G–20's efforts to prevent economic catastrophe. And here in Pittsburgh, we've taken several significant steps forward to secure our recovery and transition to strong, sustainable, and balanced economic growth. We've brought the global economy back from the brink. We laid the groundwork today for long-term prosperity as well.

It's worth recalling the situation we faced 6 months ago: a contracting economy, skyrocketing unemployment, stagnant trade, and a financial system that was nearly frozen. Some were warning of a second great depression. But because of the bold and coordinated action that we took, millions of jobs have been saved or created, the decline in output has been stopped, financial markets have come back to life, and we stopped the crisis from spreading further to the developing world.

Still, we know there is much further to go. Too many Americans are still out of work and struggling to pay bills. Too many families are uncertain about what the future will bring. Because our global economy is now fundamentally interconnected, we need to act together to make sure our recovery creates new jobs and industries, while preventing the kinds of imbalances and abuse that led us into this crisis.

But Pittsburgh was a perfect venue for this work. This city's known its share of hard times, as older industries like steel could no longer sustain growth. But Pittsburgh picked itself up, and it dusted itself off and is making the transition to job-creating industries of the future, from biotechnology to clean energy. It serves as a model for turning the page to a 21st-century economy and a reminder that the key to our future prosperity lies not just in New York or Los Angeles or Washington, but in places like Pittsburgh.

Today we took bold and concerted action to secure that prosperity and to forge a new framework for strong, sustainable, and balanced growth.

First, we agreed to sustain our recovery plans until growth is restored and a new framework for prosperity is in place. Our coordinated stimulus plans played an indispensable role in averting catastrophe. Now we must make sure that when growth returns, jobs do too. And that's why we will continue our stimulus efforts until our people are back to work and phase them out when our recovery is strong.

But we can't stop there. Going forward, we cannot tolerate the same old boom-and-bust economy of the past. We can't grow complacent. We can't wait for a crisis to cooperate. That's why our new framework will allow each of us to assess the others' policies, to build consensus on reform, and to ensure that global demand supports growth for all.

Second, we agreed to take concrete steps to move forward with tough, new financial regulations so that crises like this can never happen again. Never again should we let the schemes of a reckless few put the world's financial system and our people's well being at risk. Those who abuse the system must be held accountable. Those who act irresponsibly must not count on taxpayer dollars. Those days are over.

And that's why we've agreed to a strong set of reforms. We will bring more transparency to the derivatives market, and we will strengthen national capital standards, so that banks can withstand losses and pay for their own risks. We will create more powerful tools to hold large, global financial firms accountable and orderly procedures to manage failures without burdening taxpayers. And we will tie executive pay to long-term performance, so that sound decisions are rewarded instead of short-term greed. In short, our financial system will be far different and more secure than the one that failed so dramatically last year.

Third, we agreed to phase out subsidies for fossil fuels, so that we can transition to a 21st-century energy economy, an historic effort that would ultimately phase out nearly $300 billion in global subsidies. This reform will

increase our energy security. It will help transform our economy, so that we're creating the clean energy jobs of the future. And it will help us combat the threat posed by climate change. As I said earlier this week in New York, all nations have a responsibility to meet this challenge, and together, we have taken a substantial step forward in meeting that responsibility.

Finally, we agreed to reform our system of global economic cooperation and governance. We can no longer meet the challenges of the 21st century with 20th century approaches. And that's why the G–20 will take the lead in building a new approach to cooperation. To make our institutions reflect the reality of our times, we will shift more responsibility to emerging economies within the International Monetary Fund and give them a greater voice. To build new markets and help the world's most vulnerable citizens climb out of poverty, we established a new World Bank trust fund to support investments in food security and financing for clean and affordable energy. And to ensure that we keep our commitments, we agreed to continue to take stock of our efforts going forward.

We have learned, time and again, that in the 21st century, the nations of the world share mutual interests. That's why I've called for a new era of engagement that yields real results for our people, an era when nations live up to their responsibilities and act on behalf of our shared security and prosperity.

And that's exactly the kind of strong cooperation that we forged here in Pittsburgh and earlier this week in New York. Indeed, on issue after issue, we see that the international community is beginning to move forward together. At the G–20, we've achieved a level of tangible, global economic cooperation that we have never seen before, while also acting to address the threat posed by climate change. At the United Nations Security Council, we passed a historic resolution to secure loose nuclear materials, to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, and to seek the security of a world without them. And as we approach negotiations with Iran on October 1st, we have never been more united in standing with the United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, and Germany in demanding that Iran live up to its responsibilities.

On all of these challenges, there is much more work to be done. But we leave here today more confident and more united in the common effort of advancing security and prosperity for all of our people.

So I'm very grateful to the other world leaders who are here today. And with that, let me take a few questions. I'll start with Ben Feller of AP [Associated Press].

Iran

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. The Iranian President said today that your statement of this morning was a mistake, and that your mistakes work in Iran's favor. What gives you any sense that you can genuinely negotiate with them? And also, when you talk about holding Iran accountable, is the military option growing more likely?

The President. I think it's important to see what happened today building on what happened in New York. You had an unprecedented show of unity on the part of the world community saying that Iran's actions raised grave doubts in terms of their presentation that their nuclear program was for peaceful purposes. Not only did the United States, France, and the United Kingdom—who initiated the intelligence that brought this to light—stand before you, but you had China and Russia as well issue statements calling for an immediate IAEA investigation. That kind of solidarity is not typical. Anybody who's been following responses to Iran would have been doubtful just a few months ago that that kind of rapid response was possible.

So I think Iran is on notice, that when we meet with them on October 1st, they are going to have to come clean, and they are going to have to make a choice. Are they willing to go down the path which, I think, ultimately will lead to greater prosperity and security for Iran, giving up the acquisition of nuclear weapons and deciding that they are willing to abide by international rules and standards in their pursuit of peaceful nuclear energy? Or will they continue down a path that is going to lead to confrontation? And as I said before, what has changed is that the international community, I

think, has spoken. It is now up to Iran to respond.

I'm not going to speculate on the course of action that we will take. We're going to give October 1st a chance. But I think you've heard that even countries who a year ago or 6 months ago might have been reluctant to even discuss things like sanctions have said that this is an important enough issue to peace and stability in the world that Iran would make a mistake in ignoring the call for them to respond in a forthright and clear manner, and to recognize that the choice they make over the next several weeks and months could well determine their ability to rejoin the international community or to find themselves isolated.

Last point I'll make specifically with respect to the military, I've always said that we do not rule out any options when it comes to U.S. security interests, but I will also reemphasize that my preferred course of action is to resolve this in a diplomatic fashion. It's up to the Iranians to respond.

Patricia Zengerle at Reuters.

Afghanistan

Q. You said a couple months ago that the war in Afghanistan is a war of necessity. Do you think it's possible to meet U.S. objectives there without an extra infusion of U.S. troops? And as you consider this, how does the public's lagging support for the war affect your decisionmaking now? And how has your review process been affected by the allegations of election fraud? Thank you.

The President. First of all, let me be clear on our goals. We went into Afghanistan not because we were interested in entering that country or positioning ourselves regionally, but because Al Qaida killed 3,000-plus Americans and vowed to continue trying to kill Americans.

And so my overriding goal is to dismantle the Al Qaida network, to destroy their capacity to inflict harm, not just on us, but people of all faiths and all nationalities all around the world, and that is our overriding focus.

Stability in Afghanistan and in Pakistan are critical to that mission. And after several years of drift in Afghanistan, we now find ourselves in a situation in which you have strong commitments from the ISAF coalition, our NATO allies. All of them are committed to making this work. But I think there's also a recognition that after that many years of drift, it's important that we examine our strategies to make sure that they actually can deliver on preventing Al Qaida from establishing safe havens.

Obviously, the allegations of fraud in the recent election are of concern to us. And we are still awaiting results. We're awaiting the IEC and the ECC issuing their full report. What's most important is that there is a sense of legitimacy in Afghanistan among the Afghan people for their Government. If there is not, that makes our task much more difficult.

In terms of the review process that we're going through, we—the minute I came into office, we initiated a review, and even before that review was completed, I ordered 21,000 additional troops into Afghanistan because I thought it was important to secure the election, to make sure that the Taliban did not disrupt it. What I also said at the time was that after the election, we are going to reassess our strategy, precisely because so much of our success has to be linked to the ability of the Afghan people themselves to provide for their own security, their own training, the Afghan Government's ability to deliver services and opportunity and hope to their people.

So we are doing exactly what I said we would do in March. I put in a new commander, General McChrystal, and I asked him to give me an unvarnished assessment of the situation in Afghanistan, and he has done that as well. But keep in mind that, from the start, my belief was—and this is shared with our ISAF allies—that our military strategy is only part of a broader project that has to include a civilian component, has to include a diplomatic component, and all those different factors are being weighed and considered at this point. And I will ultimately make this decision based on what will meet that core goal that I set out at the beginning, which is to dismantle, disrupt, and destroy the Al Qaida network.

With respect to public opinion, I understand the public's weariness of this war, given that it comes on top of weariness about the

war in Iraq. Every time we get a report of a young man or woman who's fallen in either of those theaters of war, it's a reminder of the extraordinary sacrifice that they're making. I know that our partners in Afghanistan feel that same pain when they see their troops harmed.

So this is not easy. And I would expect that the public would ask some very tough questions. That's exactly what I'm doing, is asking some very tough questions. And we're not going to arrive at perfect answers. I think anybody who's looked at the situation recognizes that it's difficult and it's complicated. But my solemn obligation is to make sure that I get the best answers possible, particularly before I make decisions about sending additional troops into the theater.

Jon Delano of KDKA [KDKA–TV]. Is Jon around?

Protests at the G–20 Summit in Pittsburgh

Q. I'm right here.

The President. Good to see you, Jon.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Let me ask you, while we were inside this very safe and secure and beautiful convention center, some 5,000, at least, demonstrators were on the outside. Some caused some property damage; others just shouted their messages, much of which had to do that while you believe the G–20 summit was a success and represents a positive sign, they see it as something devilish and destructive of the world economy and, particularly, the economy of the poor. What's your response to those who are demonstrating and those who oppose this summit?

The President. Well, first of all, I think it's important just to keep things in perspective for the people of Pittsburgh. If you have looked at any of the other summits that took place, I mean, in London, you have hundreds of thousands of people on the streets. In most of these summits, there has been a much more tumultuous response. And I think the mayor and the county executive and all the people of Pittsburgh deserve extraordinary credit for having managed what is a very tranquil G–20 summit.

You know, I think that many of the protests are just directed generically at capitalism. And they object to the existing global financial system; they object to free markets. One of the great things about the United States is, is that you can speak your mind, and you can protest; that's part of our tradition. But I fundamentally disagree with their view that the free market is the source of all ills.

Ironically, if they had been paying attention to what was taking place inside the summit itself, what they would have heard was a strong recognition from the most diverse collection of leaders in history that it is important to make sure that the market is working for ordinary people; that government has a role in regulating the market in ways that don't cause the kinds of crises that we've just been living through; that our emphasis has to be on more balanced growth, and that includes making sure that growth is bottom up, that workers, ordinary people, are able to pay their bills, get—make a decent living, send their children to college; and that the more that we focus on how the least of these are doing, the better off all of us are going to be. That principles was embodied in the communique that was issued.

And so I would recommend those who are out there protesting, if they're actually interested in knowing what was taking place here, to read the communique that was issued.

Laurent Lozano [Agence France-Presse]. Is Laurent here? There he is.

Iran/Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Q. I am here. Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to follow up on Iran. Since Iran seems to be so blatantly in breach of its international obligations and with some of your allies, main allies, obviously growing impatient, why even meet with the Iranians on October 1st?

And can you also explain to us what happened between the end of 2007, when an intelligence estimate cast doubts on the fact that Iran was pursuing nuclear weapons, and this year? What credit should be given to such intelligence?

The President. Well, first of all, with respect to the intelligence that we presented to the IAEA, this was the work product of three intelligence agencies, not just one. These intelligence agencies checked over this work in a painstaking fashion, precisely because we didn't

want any ambiguity about what exactly was going on there. And I think that the response that you saw today indicates the degree to which this intelligence is solid and indicates the degree to which Iran was constructing an enrichment facility that it had not declared, contrary to U.N. resolutions and contrary to the rules governing the IAEA.

In terms of meeting, I have said repeatedly that we're going to operate on two tracks, that our preferred method of action is diplomatic, but if that does not work, then other consequences may follow. I also said—and this was debated extensively here in the United States, because there were some who suggested, you can't talk to Iran, what's the point—that by keeping the path of diplomacy open, that would actually strengthen world unity and our collective efforts to then hold Iran accountable. And I think you're starting to see the product of that strategy unfold during the course of this week.

What we saw at the United Nations in the Security Council was a strong affirmation of the principles of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and as a consequence, the IAEA is strengthened and those countries who follow the rules are strengthened when it comes to dealing with countries like North Korea and Iran that don't follow the rules. And that means that when we find that diplomacy does not work, we will be in a much stronger position to, for example, apply sanctions that have bite.

Now, as I said, that's not the preferred course of action. I would love nothing more than to see Iran choose the responsible path. Whether they do so or not will ultimately depend on their leaders, and they will have the next few weeks to show to the world which path they want to travel. Okay?

I'm going to take one last question. I've got to call on one of these guys, you know; they're my constituency here. All right, Chip [Chip Reid, CBS News].

Iran

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You just mentioned sanctions that have bite. What kinds of sanctions—and I know you can't get into details—but what kinds of sanctions at all would have bite with Iran? Do you really think any kind of sanction would have an effect on somebody like Ahmadi-nejad?

Secondly, some of your advisers today said that this announcement was a, quote, "victory." Do you consider it a victory? And if so, why didn't you announce it earlier, since you've known since you were President-elect?

The President. This isn't a football game, so I'm not interested in victory; I'm interested in resolving the problem. The problem is, is that Iran repeatedly says that it's pursuing nuclear energy only for peaceful purposes, and its actions contradict its words. And as a consequence, the region is more insecure and vital U.S. interests are threatened.

My job is to try to solve that. And my expectation is that we are going to explore with our allies, with the P–5-plus-1, a wide range of options in terms of how we approach Iran, should Iran decline to engage in the ways that are responsible.

You just told me I'm not going to get into details about sanctions, and you're right, I will not. But I think that if you have the international community making a strong united front, that Iran is going to have to pay attention.

In terms of why we didn't come out with it sooner, I already mentioned to Laurent that it is very important in these kinds of high-stakes situations to make sure that the intelligence is right. And we wanted all three agencies—the French, the Brits, and the Americans—to have thoroughly scrubbed this and to make sure that we were absolutely confident about the situation there. We are, and now it's up to Iran to respond. Okay?

Thank you very much, everybody. I hope you enjoyed Pittsburgh. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 5:13 p.m. at the Pittsburgh Convention Center. In his remarks, the President referred to Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan. He also referred to the Independent Election Commission (IEC) and the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) of Afghanistan. Reporters referred to President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran.

The President's Weekly Address
September 26, 2009

This week, I joined leaders from around the world at the United Nations and the G–20 economic summit in Pittsburgh. Today I can report on what we achieved: a new commitment to meet common challenges and real progress in advancing America's national security and economic prosperity.

As I said at the U.N., over the past 9 months, my administration has renewed American leadership and pursued a new era of engagement in which we call upon all nations to live up to their responsibilities. This week, our engagement produced tangible results in several areas.

In Pittsburgh, the world's major economies agreed to continue our efforts to spur global demand, to put our people back to work. We committed ourselves to economic growth that is balanced and sustained, so we avoid the booms and busts of the past. We reached a historic agreement to reform the global financial system, to promote responsibility and prevent abuse, so that we never face a crisis like this again. And we reformed our international economic architecture, so that we can better coordinate our efforts to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

We also established American leadership in the global pursuit of the clean energy of the 21st century. I am proud that the G–20 nations agreed to phase out $300 billion worth of fossil fuel subsidies. This will increase our energy security, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, combat the threat of climate change, and help create the new jobs and industries of the future.

In New York, we advanced the cause of peace and security. I joined the first meeting between Israeli and Palestinian leaders in nearly a year, a meeting that even 9 months ago did not seem possible. And we resolved to move forward in the journey towards a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

We also took unprecedented steps to secure loose nuclear materials, to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, and to seek a world without them. As the first U.S. President to ever chair a meeting of the United Nations Security Council, I was proud that the Council passed a historic and unanimous resolution embracing the comprehensive strategy I outlined this year in Prague.

To prevent nuclear weapons from falling into the hands of terrorists, the Security Council endorsed our global effort to lock down all vulnerable material within 4 years. We reaffirmed the basic compact of the global nonproliferation regime: All nations have the right to peaceful nuclear energy, nations with nuclear weapons have the responsibility to move toward disarmament, and nations without them have the responsibility to forsake them.

The United States is meeting our responsibilities by pursuing an agreement with Russia to reduce our strategic warheads and launchers. And just as we meet our responsibilities, so must other nations, including Iran and North Korea.

Earlier this year, we imposed tough, new sanctions on North Korea to stop their efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction. And we will continue to stand with our allies and partners to press North Korea to move in a new direction.

This week, we joined with the United Kingdom and France in presenting evidence that Iran has been building a secret nuclear facility to enrich uranium. This is a serious challenge to the global nonproliferation regime and continues a disturbing pattern of Iranian evasion. That's why international negotiations with Iran scheduled for October 1st now take on added urgency.

My offer of a serious, meaningful dialogue to resolve this issue remains open. But Iran must now cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency and take action to demonstrate its peaceful intentions.

On this, the international community is more united than ever before. Yesterday I stood shoulder to shoulder with our European allies in condemning Iran's program. In our meetings and public statements, President Medvedev of Russia and I agreed that Iran must pursue a new course, or face consequences. All of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and Germany have made it clear that Iran must fulfill its responsibilities.

Iran's leaders must now choose. They can live up to their responsibilities and achieve integration with the community of nations, or they will face increased pressure and isolation and deny opportunity to their own people.

These are the urgent threats of our time. And the United States is committed to a new chapter of international cooperation to meet them. This new chapter will not be written in 1 week or even 1 year. But we have begun, and for the American people and the people of the world, it will mean greater security and prosperity for years to come.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:25 p.m. on September 25 at the Pittsburgh Convention Center in Pittsburgh, PA, for broadcast on September 26. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 25, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on September 26.

Remarks at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Dinner
September 26, 2009

They didn't want me to be on the right. [*Laughter*] This is the CBC. [*Laughter*]

To all the outstanding guests here tonight, to our outstanding chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, Barbara Lee, please give her a big round of applause. To her outstanding foundation chair, Kendrick Meek, please give them a round of applause.

Majority Leader Steny Hoyer is in the house. The House Majority Whip, James Clyburn, is in the house. Chairman of the DCCC Chris Van Hollen is in the house. And my great friend and the chair of the DNC, Tim Kaine—please give him a big round of applause—Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

I want to begin by congratulating all of the recipients of the Phoenix Award for outstanding contributions to American life. I have to single out one of tonight's honorees, for whom I can personally vouch, our Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice. Susan is doing a fantastic job as Ambassador, especially this past week when we were at the United Nations, and we are all lucky, all of America is lucky, to have her representing us there. So please give her a big round of applause.

I look out at all of you tonight—on Members of Congress, on State and local officials, on leaders of all kinds—and I am reminded of the extraordinary acts of public service being rendered by African Americans today. I'm reminded of the difference each of you is making at every level of government, in the quiet neighborhoods of our small towns and the bustling streets of our big cities.

But I'm also reminded that it wasn't always this way. I'm reminded of a time long before the CBC was formed, long before the civil rights movement was sparked, when just a lone African American was serving in the United States Congress.

A North Carolinian by birth, the child, some say, of slaves, George Henry White was the last of that first generation of African Americans elected to Congress in the aftermath of Appomattox. But at the end of the 1800s, when a segregationist Supreme Court handed down "separate but equal," with African Americans being purged from the voter rolls, with strange fruit growing on the poplar trees, White decided against seeking reelection—meaning that once again, neither the

House nor the Senate would be occupied by a single African American Member.

And at the end of an inspiring farewell address, the gentleman from North Carolina said, "This, Mr. Chairman, is perhaps the Negroes' temporary farewell to the American Congress; but let me say, phoenix-like, he will rise up some day and come again."

Members of the CBC, all of you gathered here today, tonight is a fulfillment of that prophecy. While George Henry White might not have foreseen the exact details of Montgomery and Selma, while he might not have foreseen the precise outlines of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act and all the struggles to come, he knew that someday African Americans would sit in our city halls and statehouses. He knew that someday the Halls of Congress would be walked by Representatives and Senators of every creed and color. He knew, as Frederick Douglass knew, as Harriet Tubman knew, as Martin Luther King, Jr., knew, that the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.

More than a century has passed since Congressman White left Congress. In that time, we have faced a number of difficult tests and bitter trials, as a people and as a nation. There have been dangers to peace and security; there have been barriers to justice and equality; there have been threats to opportunity. So we are by no means the first generation of Americans to be tested, but tested we have been. Most recently, we've been tested by an economic crisis unlike any that we've seen since the Great Depression.

Now, I have to say that some folks seem to have forgotten just how bad things were when I took office. They seem to be exercising some selective memory. So let's just take a stroll down memory lane. Our economy was shedding 700,000 jobs every single month, more than the entire population of Baltimore losing work every month. Credit had dried up. Loans for everything from college to cars were nearly impossible to come by. Our entire financial system was poised on the brink of collapse with many fearing that what has been called the "great recession" would become another great depression. You remember that.

That's why we acted boldly, that's why we acted swiftly to put in place a Recovery Act that was passed with the help of Members of Congress here tonight and that's being carried out with the help from Governors and mayors here tonight. And as a consequence of those early actions, we're cutting taxes for 95 percent of working families—not for the rich folks, but for ordinary folks—putting some money in their pockets. We're extending and increasing unemployment insurance for 12 million Americans to help them weather this economic storm. We are making COBRA 65 percent cheaper so Americans don't lose their health care coverage if they're out there looking for work. We are saving the jobs of teachers and police officers that Americans rely on all across the Nation. And we're putting Americans to work rebuilding our crumbling roads and bridges and schools and waterways with the largest investment in our infrastructure since the Interstate Highway System was built in the 1950s.

Because of the action we've taken so far, we have stopped the bleeding in our economy. So the next time some of these folks come up asking you what the Recovery Act has done, you tell them it has prevented us from going into a much worse place. That much we know. That's been confirmed.

But we also know that we've got a long way to go, that the progress we've made has been uneven, and that this recession has hit communities of color with a particular ferocity. Today, more than one in seven African Americans are out of work, the highest in nearly a quarter of a century. More than 2 out of 10 African Americans—and 3 out of 10 Black children—are living in poverty.

So this economic crisis has made the problems in the communities of color much worse, but we all know that these problems have been there for a long time. Communities were struggling to catch up long before this economic storm came ashore. One study that looked at trends in this country over the past few decades found that while roughly 7 out of every 10 middle class White children end up surpassing their parents' income, roughly 7 out of every 10 middle class Black children do not. Think about that: for the majority of some Americans,

upward mobility; for the majority of others, stagnation or even downward mobility. That was taking place over the last decade, before the economic crisis. That kind of inequality is unacceptable in the United States of America.

Now, bringing hope and opportunity to places where they're in short supply, that's not easy. It will take a focused and sustained effort to eradicate the structural inequalities in our communities, structural inequalities that make it difficult for children of color to make a success of their lives, no matter how smart or how driven or how talented they are. And that's why we're launching Promise Neighborhoods to build on Geoffrey Canada's success in Harlem with a comprehensive approach to ending poverty by giving people the tools they need to pull themselves up. That's why I've created an Office of Urban Affairs to lift up our cities with a coordinated strategy to unleash their potential. That's why my administration, under the leadership of Attorney General Eric Holder, is serious about enforcing our civil rights laws and tearing down barriers to equal opportunity.

But of all the barriers still standing in 2009, few are more unjust, few are more entrenched, few are more inhumane than the barriers to a healthy life and a good education; barriers that constrain the dreams not only of African Americans, but of all Americans; barriers that can, and must, and shall be overcome.

For the sake of every American living today and for the sake of every American yet to be born, we must bring about a better health care system in this country—not in 10 years, not in 5 years, not in 1 year—this year. I know there are voices out there telling us we're moving too fast when it comes to health insurance reform. They're telling us to slow down. They're telling us to wait.

How are we supposed to tell Americans like Easter Spencer to wait? This is a woman who discovered a lump in her breast back in June and was told it would be 6 months before she was eligible for health insurance that would cover the cost of removing it. We're telling her to wait?

How are we supposed to tell Americans like Nathan Wilkes to wait? This is a man whose health insurance came with a cap, so when the claims started piling up because he had a sick child, he was left to frantically search for another option, or face $10,000 of out-of-pocket costs.

Let me tell you: We have been waiting for health reform since the days of Teddy Roosevelt. We've been waiting since the days of Harry Truman. We've been waiting since Johnson and Nixon and Clinton. We cannot wait any longer. "There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over." There comes a time to remember the fierce urgency of right now.

Now is the time to enact health insurance reform in the United States of America. Now is the time to offer stability and security to Americans who have insurance. Now is the time to make it affordable for those who don't have health insurance. Now is the time to slow the growth of health care costs for our families and business, our Government. That's the kind of reform that we need. Now is the time. And that's what so many Members of Congress here tonight and all across the country are working so hard to produce.

Now, many of you are probably familiar with our plan, but I just want to go over a few things so you know what to tell your friends and neighbors and folks in the community who ask about it because they may be seeing some misinformation—just a little bit. [*Laughter*] I was up at the G–20—just a little aside—I was up in the G–20, and some of you saw—there's big flags and all the world leaders come in and Michelle and I are shaking hands with them. And one of the leaders—I won't mention who it was—[*laughter*]—he comes up to me. We take the picture, we go behind, and he says, "Barack, explain to me this health care debate." He says, "We don't understand it. You're trying to make sure everybody has health care, and they're putting a Hitler mustache on you. I don't—that doesn't make sense to me. Explain that to me." He didn't understand. So let me just clarify.

If you already have health insurance, under the plan we've developed, you will not, I

repeat, you will not have to change your coverage or your doctor. We are not requiring those changes in this legislation.

What we will do is make insurance work better for everybody. It will be against the law for insurance companies to deny you coverage because of a preexisting condition. It will be against the law for insurance companies to drop your coverage when you get sick, or water it down when you need it the most. They won't be able to place some arbitrary cap on how much coverage you can receive in a given year or a lifetime. We will place a limit on how much you can be charged for out-of-pocket expenses. Because in the United States of America, nobody should go broke because they got sick.

We will make it easier to identify health care disparities and work to close them. That's long overdue. And insurance companies will be required to cover, at no extra charge, routine checkups and preventive care, like mammograms and colonoscopies. There's no reason we shouldn't be catching diseases like breast cancer before they get worse. That makes sense; it saves money; it saves lives. That's what we're going to do.

So that's what we do for the folks with health insurance. And we'll finally offer the tens of millions of Americans who don't have health insurance some affordable choices. We'll do this with a new insurance exchange, a marketplace where individuals and small-business men can shop for affordable health insurance plans that work for them, as one big group, so they'll have leverage to get a better deal than they get right now, a much better deal. And that is going to save them money.

Now, there are going to be some who claim that, "Well, this is a Government takeover of health care." There are going to be some who suggest that they're going to lose their choices. We are talking about expanding choices. And I just want everybody to remember that they said the same thing when we tried to pass Social Security. They called FDR all kinds of things that we cannot repeat here today. They said the same thing about Lyndon Johnson when we tried to pass Medicare. They are saying the same things now, trying the same tactics, but we are going to get this done this year thanks to members of the CBC and Members of Congress all across the country, and thanks to you at the grassroots level that are going to stand up and insist that we cannot afford to wait any longer.

Now, the key to progress for all Americans is not just healthy bodies, it's also a well educated mind. And we know that the African American community will fall behind in the United States and the United States will fall behind in the world unless we do a far better job than we've been doing of educating our sons and daughters; unless we close the achievement gap that sees Black students and Brown students lag behind their White classmates year after year, decade after decade; unless we reach all the students who are dropping out of school and giving up on their future.

Today, almost a third of students drop out of high school—a third—and a disproportionate number of them are African American or Hispanic. That's not just a loss for the African American community or the Hispanic community; that's a loss for all Americans. That's the future workforce. In the 21st century, when a good education is a prerequisite for success, when the jobs of tomorrow require a bachelor's degree or more, when the countries that outeducate us today will outcompete us tomorrow, we need the talents, the energy, the contributions of all our children, not just some. We need to prepare every child in America to compete with any worker in the world.

Now, there are a number of things Government can do to offer our kids a 21st-century education. It can increase Pell grants and Perkins loans and simplify financial aid forms. It can establish better standards and assessments in our schools. It can reward teachers who are doing a great job and move bad ones out of the classroom. It can improve quality in early learning initiatives. It can rebuild our crumbling schools. It can offer all our children a complete and competitive education from cradle to classroom, from college through a career. That's what Government can do. That's what Government must do. And that's exactly what we've begun to do, here in Washington, across this country.

And I've said it before—and I know I may sound like a broken record—but I'm going to say it again: Government alone cannot get our children to the promised land. Government can't put away the PlayStation. Government can't put our kids to bed at a reasonable hour. Government can't attend those parent-teacher conferences. Government can't read a book to your child at night. Government can't help them with their homework. Government can't make sure they leave to school on time. These are things only a mother can do and a father can do. These are things that a parent can do.

We need to accept our responsibilities, as parents and community leaders. We need to be good role models and encourage excellence in all our children, every last one of them. We need to let them know there are no excuses for not doing your best every day, all the time, in order to achieve your dreams.

We've got to push our kids to aim higher. I don't want all our kids aspiring to be ballers or rappers. I want them aspiring to be teachers and doctors and scientists and engineers. I want them aspiring to be Members of Congress and Supreme Court Justices. I want them aspiring to be the President of the United States of America. I want them to have their sights set high.

No excuses for mediocrity. If they come home with a "B," don't tell them, "That's great." I know some of you all do that. [*Laughter*] Tell them to work harder and get an A. Set their heights high.

A world-class education; affordable, quality health insurance; jobs and opportunity; all of us accepting responsibility for ourselves and our children and our common future, that's how we'll make life better for the African American community, and thereby make life better for the larger American community. That is how we will build a new foundation for our economy that yields lasting, shared prosperity. That's how we'll take up the cause of freedom and justice and equality in our time, just as earlier generations of Americans took it up in theirs.

Remember what it was like for George Henry White in the early days of the 20th century, as he was bidding farewell to the House of Representatives, the last African American to serve there for a quarter century. Remember the taunts and the threats and the attacks braved by White, braved by Lewis, braved by Chisholm. Remember all they did, all so many others did, to make it possible for us to be here tonight, to make it possible for you to be here tonight, to make it possible for me to be here tonight.

Because I know that if we can act as they did—with the same sense of unity, the same sense of possibility, the same determination, the same sense of purpose—then we will not only help America's peoples live healthier lives, we won't just help America's children live out their dreams, but it will be said of us, as it was said of our forbearers, that when the need was great and the moment was hard, when the odds seemed against us, we did our part to perfect our Union.

Thank you. God bless you. And God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:20 p.m. at Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Geoffrey Canada, president and chief executive officer, Harlem Children's Zone. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 27.

Remarks Following a Meeting With North Atlantic Treaty Organization Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen
September 29, 2009

President Obama. Hello, everybody. I just want to welcome Secretary General Rasmussen to the Oval Office. He and I had the opportunity to get to know each other at the

NATO summit in Strasbourg, at which he was nominated and then selected as the new Secretary General of NATO.

I can say that given his experience as a head of state, that everybody had confidence in his decisive and effective leadership abilities. That confidence has proven justified. In the brief time that he has been in NATO, I think he's already shown himself to be an active and effective Secretary General, interested in reforming and renewing the NATO alliance and always rooted in the understanding that this is the most successful military alliance in history and the cornerstone of transatlantic relationships.

We had a very fruitful discussion while he was here. We talked about, obviously, the most important NATO mission right now, and that is Afghanistan. And we both agree that it is absolutely critical that we are successful in dismantling, disrupting, destroying the Al Qaida network, and that we are effectively working with the Afghan Government to provide the security necessary for that country.

This is not a American battle; this is a NATO mission as well. And we are working actively and diligently to consult with NATO at every step of the way. And I'm very grateful for the leadership that Secretary General Rasmussen has shown in committing NATO to a full partnership in this process.

We also discussed missile defense, and we both agreed that the configuration that we have proposed is one that, ultimately, will serve the interests of not only the United States but also NATO alliance members most effectively. It allows for a full collaboration with NATO members, and we are very optimistic that it will achieve our aims and deal with the very real threat of ballistic missiles.

We also agree that it is important for us to reach out to Russia and explore ways in which the missile defense configurations that we envision could potentially lead to further collaboration with Russia on this front, and that we want to improve generally not only U.S.-Russian relations but also NATO-Russian relations, while making absolutely clear that our commitments to all of our allies in NATO is sacrosanct and that our commitment to Article 5 continues.

Finally, we discussed the process that we're putting forward for a strategic concept review. NATO has been so successful that sometimes, I think, that we forget this was shaped and crafted for a 20th century landscape. We're now well into the 21st century, and that means that we are going to have to constantly renew and revitalize NATO to meet current threats and not just past threats.

There has been a process that has been put forward; we are fully supportive of it. I am confident that under Secretary General Rasmussen's leadership that it will ultimately be successful, and that we will continue to see NATO operate in a way that is good for U.S. national security interests, good for our allies, and good for the world.

So, Mr. Secretary General, thank you for the excellent work that you're doing, and we appreciate it very much. And please feel free to share a few words.

Secretary General Rasmussen. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for your kind words. The President and I have had a very constructive meeting. I have thanked the President for his strong support. I look very much forward to cooperating with the President and his administration on reforming, transforming, and modernizing NATO. We are going to elaborate a new strategic concept, which I hope can serve as leverage for renewal of NATO.

Of course, our main focus today has been our cooperation in Afghanistan. I say "our" focus deliberately, because our operation in Afghanistan is not America's responsibility or burden alone. It is and it will remain a team effort. I agree with President Obama in his approach: strategy first, then resources. The first thing is not numbers, it is to find and fine-tune the right approach to implement the strategy already laid down. And all NATO allies are right now looking at McChrystal's review.

I'm convinced that success in Afghanistan is achievable and will be achieved. And don't make any mistake: The normal discussion on the right approach should not be misinterpreted as lack of resolve. This alliance will stand united, and we will stay in Afghanistan as long as it takes to finish our job.

As the President mentioned, we have all—also discussed missile defense. I welcome the new U.S. approach, which will allow all allies to participate, which will protect all allies. And in fact, I think the proposed new system can serve as an instrument to bind all allies, new and old, even stronger together.

Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you so much. All right, thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:09 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Secretary General Rasmussen referred to Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan.

Remarks at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland
September 30, 2009

Francis, thank you for the extraordinary introduction. I want to echo what has just been said about my Secretary of HHS. She is, I just think, outstanding. She hit the ground running, and with all the burdens that she carries, she always has a sense of fun and energy and is just good to be around. So please give Kathleen Sebelius a big round of applause.

I want to acknowledge that we are in Congressman Chris Van Hollen's district, a Democrat from Maryland, and Chris is here and a great supporter of NIH historically. We are very grateful for him. And we are so happy to have Senator Arlen Specter, who is directly responsible for so much of the funding for NIH research. He is a huge champion for your cause. And I know you already gave him a round—rousing round of applause, but I just want to echo what a great job he's been doing and what a great partner he's been.

Finally, somebody who's not here but deserves a little credit is my Vice President, Joe Biden, who is managing the stimulus process——

[*At this point, there was a microphone feedback problem.*]

Whoa! That's Joe trying to call in. [*Laughter*] Joe is doing a great job and—but he is pretty tough when it comes to tracking the money, and so he's going to be paying attention—doc—[*laughter*]—to make sure that it's going where it's supposed to be going.

Before I begin my remarks about this extraordinary institution, I want to say a word about the tragic events that took place yesterday in America Samoa. My deepest sympathies are with the families who've lost loved ones and the many people whose lives have been affected by the earthquake and the tsunami. To aid in the response, I've declared this a major disaster to speed the deployment of resources. And FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, is working closely with emergency responders on the ground, and the Coast Guard is helping to provide immediate help to those in need. We also stand ready to help our friends in neighboring Samoa and throughout the region, and we'll continue to monitor the situation closely as we keep the many people who've been touched by this tragedy in our thoughts and in our prayers.

Now, today I'm here to talk about our Nation's commitment to research. I want to thank Dr. Collins and his team for showing me and Kathleen some of the extraordinary groundbreaking research being done at the National Institutes of Health. The work you do is not easy. It takes a great deal of patience and persistence. But it holds incredible promise for the health of our people and the future of our Nation and our world. That's why I'm here today.

For decades, the NIH has been at the forefront of medical invention and innovation, helping to save countless lives and relieve untold suffering. And yet, if we're honest, in recent years, we've seen our leadership slipping as scientific integrity was, at times, undermined and research funding failed to keep pace.

We know that the work you do would not get done if left solely to the private sector. Some research does not lend itself to quick profit. And that's why places like the NIH were founded. And that's why my administration is making a historic commitment to research and the pursuit of discovery. And that's why today we're announcing that we've awarded $5 billion—that's with a "b"—in grants through the Recovery Act to conduct cutting-edge research all across America, to unlock treatments to diseases that have long plagued humanity, to save and enrich the lives of people all over the world. This represents the single largest boost to biomedical research in history.

Now, one of the most exciting areas of research to move forward as a result of this investment will be in applying what scientists have learned through the Human Genome Project to help us understand, prevent, and treat various forms of cancer, heart disease, and autism. And having been a leader of the Human Genome Project, Dr. Collins knows this promise all too well. And it's a promise that we've only just begun to realize.

In cancer, we're beginning to see treatments based on our knowledge of genetic changes that cause the disease and the genetic predispositions that many of us carry that make us more susceptible to the disease. But we've only scratched the surface of these kinds of treatments because we've only begun to understand the relationship between our environment and genetics in causing and promoting cancer.

So through the Recovery Act, the NIH is expanding the Cancer Genome Atlas, collecting more than 20,000 tissue samples to sequence the DNA of more than 20 types of cancer. And this has extraordinary potential to help us better understand and treat this disease. Cancer has touched the lives of all Americans, including my own family's; 1.5 million people will be diagnosed in the next year. Half a million people will lose their lives. We all know the terrible toll on families and the promise of treatments that will allow a mother to be there for her children as they grow up, that will make it possible for a child to reach adulthood, that will allow countless people to survive a disease that's claimed far too many lives.

Through these investments in research, we will also have the opportunity to make strides in the treatment and prevention of heart disease, the leading cause of death in the United States. Since 1948, for example, researchers have been following generations of residents in the town of Framingham, Massachusetts, to better understand the cause of cardiovascular illness. Now we have a chance to study the DNA of these participants and connect what we know after decades of observation to what we'll soon know about their genetic makeup. And perhaps we can identify those who are likely get high blood pressure or high cholesterol and find ways to intervene before heart disease even develops.

And finally, we'll also provide the largest ever infusion of funding into autism research. Across the country, grant recipients will have the opportunity to study genetic and environmental factors of a disease that now touches more than 1 in every 150 children. And what we learn will hopefully lead to greater understanding, early interventions, more effective treatments and therapies to help these children live their lives and achieve their fullest potential, which is extraordinary.

Now, we know that these investments in research will improve and save countless lives for generations to come. And as I was taking a tour with Dr. Collins and Dr. Fauci and others, just listening to the possibility of a HIV/AIDS vaccine, or hearing the latest treatments of cancer that allow people who previously only had resort to the most violent types of radiation or chemotherapy now being able to take pills and seeing extraordinary progress, it is something that is entirely inspiring. But we also know that these investments will save jobs, they'll create new jobs—tens of thousands of jobs—conducting research and manufacturing and supplying medical equipment and building and modernizing laboratories and research facilities all across America.

And that's also what the Recovery Act is all about. It's not just about creating make-work jobs; it's about creating jobs that will make a lasting difference for our future. From the beginning, our goal has been to rescue the economy at the same time as we're laying a new

foundation for lasting economic growth. And central to that foundation is a health care system that can deliver the treatments and cures you discover in an affordable way. After all, decades of research make no difference to the family that is dropped from an insurance policy when a child gets sick. And breakthroughs with the potential to save lives don't matter when your insurance doesn't cover a preexisting condition. And as costs rise and rise, that leaves less and less for the kinds of investments in health care and in basic research that will actually improve our well being. That's why we're working so hard to pass long-overdue reforms.

Now, I should point out there are some who have opposed the reforms we're suggesting, saying it would lead to a takeover by the Government of the health care sector. But this concern about the involvement of Government, I should point out, has been present whenever we have sought to improve our health care system.

Here's an interesting quote from FDR; he addressed it nearly 70 years ago right here at the dedication of NIH. And he said, and I quote, "Neither the American people, nor their Government, intends to socialize medical practice any more than they plan to socialize industry. In American life, the family doctor, the general practitioner performs a service which we rely upon and which we trust as a nation, and there can be no substitute for the personal relationship between doctor and patient, which is a source of strength of [our] medical practice in our land."

FDR was being accused of a Government takeover of health care. [*Laughter*] But he thought NIH was a pretty good idea. And think about everything that's happened and all the lives that have been saved and all the progress that's been made and all the commercial activity that's been generated as a consequence of that early investment.

And these words are a reminder that while we've made great advances in medicine, our debates haven't always kept pace. And these words remind us that there have always been those who argued against progress, but that at our best, we've never allowed our fears to overwhelm our hopes for a brighter future.

That's been at the heart of the work of the National Institutes of Health for decades. It was here that Dr. Roy Hertz would develop the first successful cure of metastatic cancer through chemotherapy, as a group of women, who would have surely died, began actually to get better. It was here that Dr. Nina Braunwald, the first woman ever to be board-certified in cardiothoracic surgery, conducted some of the earliest operations to replace heart valves. It was here, in the years after President Roosevelt's visit, that polio vaccines would be tested to end a scourge that affected millions, including, obviously, the President that helped to make the research possible.

We can only imagine the new discoveries that will flow from the investments we make today. Breakthroughs in medical research take far more than the occasional flash of brilliance, as important as that can be. Progress takes time; it takes hard work; it can be unpredictable; it can require a willingness to take risks, going down some blind alleys occasionally. Figuring out what doesn't work is sometimes as important as figuring out what does. All of this needs the support of Government. It holds promise like no other area of human endeavor, but we've got to make a commitment to it.

And here at the National Institutes of Health, and at universities and research institutions across this country, you are demonstrating our capacity not just as a nation but as human beings to harness our creativity and our ingenuity to save lives, to spare suffering, to build a better world for ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren. That is our great promise, and it is one that we've once again begun to fulfill.

So thank you for your extraordinary work. And we are going to keep on providing the support that you need. The American people are looking forward to the next set of discoveries that all of you are working on today.

Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:03 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Francis S. Collins, Director, National Institutes of Health; and Anthony S. Fauci, Director, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Statement on the Earthquake and Tsunami in the South Pacific Region
September 30, 2009

Michelle and I send our deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of those who lost their lives in the earthquake and tsunami in American Samoa and the region. I am closely monitoring these tragic events and have declared a major disaster for American Samoa, which will provide the tools necessary for a full, swift, and aggressive response. The Federal Emergency Management Agency is in close and constant contact with emergency responders, and the U.S. Coast Guard is fully supporting the deployment of resources to those areas in need of immediate assistance. We also stand ready to help our friends in Samoa and the region. Going forward, we will continue to provide the resources necessary to respond to this catastrophe, and we will keep those who have lost so much in our thoughts and prayers.

Statement on Senate Action on Energy Reform Legislation
September 30, 2009

I applaud Chairmen Kerry and Boxer for their leadership on comprehensive energy reform. With the draft legislation they are announcing today, we are one step closer to putting America in control of our energy future and making America more energy independent. My administration is deeply committed to passing a bill that creates new American jobs and the clean energy incentives that foster innovation. I commend Senators Boxer and Kerry for their work and look forward to signing comprehensive energy legislation that addresses this urgent challenge.

Statement on the United Nations Security Council Resolution on the Protection of Women and Children in Conflict
September 30, 2009

Today the United States joins with the international community in sending a simple and unequivocal message: violence against women and children will not be tolerated and must be stopped. The United States places a high priority on this issue of fundamental human rights and global security. I am pleased that the Security Council, chaired by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, unanimously approved a U.S.-sponsored resolution that will increase the protection of women and children in conflict. In particular, the resolution focuses on one of the most abhorrent features of modern war: the use of rape as a weapon and other forms of sexual violence against women and children.

The dignity of all human beings must be respected, and their rights protected. I applaud the United Nations and its member states for standing together to confront these despicable acts. I honor the courage that is shown every single day by women and girls facing hardship around the world, who have such an important role to play in resolving conflicts and advancing peace. And my administration will continue to support the right of all women and girls to live free from fear and to realize their full potential.

Remarks at a Democratic Governors Association Fundraiser
October 1, 2009

Thank you. Please, have a seat. You don't want to follow Brian Schweitzer as a general rule, but I am grateful for the outstanding work he's doing in Montana and his extraordinary leadership of DGA. And I want to thank as well the vice chair, a great friend in Maryland, an outstanding leader, somebody who is really just navigating through some difficult times with grace and skill, Martin O'Malley. Please give both of them a huge round of applause.

To all the other Governors in attendance: Governor Beshear and Governor Culver, deJongh, Markell, Nixon, Parkinson, and Perdue—what a great lineup. And I had a chance to talk to all of them backstage, and each and every one of them are leading in the ways that make me proud to be a Democrat. And the diversity that they embody and represent, I think, is also a credit to our party.

I am so glad to be here not just because I always spending—I always enjoy spending time with the kind of outstanding Governors and a few aspiring Governors that may be in the room—because I'm absolutely committed to making sure that our Governors have the support that they need to move their States forward. And I'm absolutely committed to working with each and every one of them in the years ahead to move America forward.

Now, I don't think it's any secret, these are challenging times for America and challenging times for each of the 50 States. Few understand that better than the Nation's Governors. All of them are on the frontlines, governing their States during an economic crisis unlike anything that we've seen since the Great Depression. They're witnessing the toll of this crisis that has—that families, small businesses, and neighborhoods are all experiencing. They're being made to govern in a time of shrinking revenues and budget shortfalls, and they're facing tough choices about where to save, where to spend, and how to navigate their States and their people through this economic storm.

I also have to be honest that the tough choices they'll have to make will not end any time soon. But what I hope has made their job easier and will continue to make their job easier is knowing that they've got a full, committed partner in the White House. And I know that—[*applause*]—I also know that their job has been made a little bit easier because of the Recovery Act that was passed here back at the beginning of my administration, and that I signed into law, and that's being carried out with their help, an act that's not only broken our economic freefall, but eased the burden on our States and helped our Governors get their States back on track.

Let me just describe what the Recovery Act has meant. Because of the Recovery Act, we're helping close budget gaps; we're preventing layoffs of teachers and police officers. America is stronger because of it. We put a tax cut into the pockets of 95 percent of working families to help them pay for their everyday needs. We're increasing and extending unemployment insurance to 12 million Americans to help them weather the economic storm, and we've lowered the cost of COBRA coverage for people who have lost their jobs, so that it's 65 percent lower and they can keep their health insurance as they're looking for work. And we're putting Americans back to work doing the work that America needs done rebuilding roads and bridges and new schools and all manner of construction projects across all 50 States. It's the largest single investment of infrastructure in this country since Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System back in the 1950s.

So we know that the Recovery Act is making a difference. It's made a difference for our families. It's made a difference for our States. It's making a difference for the Nation. But I'm not going to rest, I know the Governors and candidates here today are not going to rest, and I know that the American people are not going to rest until everybody who's looking for work can find a job, until our workers aren't afraid that they'll be the next ones let go,

until our markets aren't only climbing again, but our businesses are hiring again. And while unemployment is usually the last measure to improve during a recovery, we're not going to rest until it does in our cities, in our States, and across the country.

Now, it's going to take a number of steps to reverse the current job climate and create jobs in this country. And that's why my administration has been working with our Governors on a number of different fronts.

Under the outstanding leadership of my Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, we're working to transform our entire education system, because we know that countries that outeducate us today are going to outcompete us tomorrow.

We're investing in a clean energy sector that will not only help free America from the grip of foreign oil, but create new American jobs that pay well and can't be outsourced. And Governor Schweitzer has been an extraordinary leader on clean energy agendas.

We're working to reform our health insurance system, because one of the best ways to spur economic growth is to ease the backbreaking burden of health care costs on America's business.

Now, this is a point that's gotten lost a little bit over the past few months during the health care debate, so let me just talk about that. Over the past few weeks and months, we've spent a lot of time talking about how health insurance reform would offer stability and security for families and individuals who have health insurance, how it would make insurance finally affordable for those who don't have health insurance, and how it would reduce costs over the long term for families and for government. All these things are tremendously important, and I'm glad we've spent some time discussing it. But another important aspect of reform is what it will mean for America's businesses, and particularly our entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Our economy is built not only on the hard work of ordinary Americans, but on the ideas and the energy and determination of our entrepreneurs and our small-businesspeople. Now, these small businesses generate half of all new private sector jobs. They are how millions of our hard-working families make a living. They're what keeps local economies going in small towns and big cities. And they're one of the reasons that America has remained an economic powerhouse in the 21st century.

The States that are represented by the Governors here today, as well as every other State in the Union, are home to thousands of entrepreneurs of all kinds, with great ideas, with the potential to create jobs and transform industries and strengthen America's economy. But all too often these economic pioneers are made to give up on their dreams—some of them never follow up on them in the first place—because of what it would cost them to provide health insurance for themselves, their families, and potential employees.

Right now the cost of covering an employee can be prohibitively expensive. And a new study came out yesterday from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation showing what would happen in the next 10 years if we fail to enact health insurance reform. Under the worst case scenario, businesses would see their premiums more than double in 27 States. And even under the best case scenario, employers in nearly every single State would see premiums go up by 60 percent.

That kind of future is bad for entrepreneurs, it's bad for businesses, it's bad for the United States of America. We can't afford a health insurance system that hampers America's economy in the 21st century; we need a health system that unleashes its potential. And that's what reform will help us achieve.

So I know some folks say we should focus on fixing the economy instead of on health insurance reform. And through the Recovery Act, our financial stabilization measures, our clean energy initiatives, what we're doing in education, we are taking every possible step to spur economic growth and spur job creation. But I also believe that health insurance reform is absolutely critical to fixing our economy. It's how we'll encourage more entrepreneurs to take a gamble on a good idea. It's how we'll make sure that if they do, they'll be able to cover the costs of insuring their employees.

Now, we're going to do this by setting up a health insurance exchange, a marketplace that

offers a number of different, affordable health insurance options. We'll provide a tax credit to small businesses to help make insurance more affordable. And while there will be a requirement for individuals to carry insurance and businesses to cover their workers, 95 percent of all small businesses would be exempt from this requirement. We will make it easier for them, particularly because a lot of them are already providing coverage at just exorbitant rates to their employees. Health insurance shouldn't be up to 18 percent more expensive for small firms than it is for larger firms. And with these reforms, we'll help close that gap.

So that's what health insurance reform will do to spur business and foster entrepreneurship and jump-start job creation. And here's what else reform will mean for our States: It will mean new jobs in community health centers; it will mean stemming rising premiums that cost State governments roughly $95 billion a year; it will mean reducing drug costs by increasing the Medicaid drug rebate, a step that will benefit States and Federal governments alike; and it will mean curbing the up to $141 billion we're expected to spend each year caring for the uninsured by the end of the next decade by finally making health insurance affordable for everyone.

That's what it means for States. That's what it'll mean for business. That's what it'll mean for America. And we are at that rare moment when we've been given the opportunity to remake our world for the better; that rare moment where we have a chance to seize our future. And as difficult as it sometimes is, what is inherent about the American spirit is the fact that we don't cling to the past in this country, we always move forward.

That movement doesn't begin in Washington; it often begins in States. It begins in neighborhoods. It begins in communities. It happens because the American people decide that it's time to bring about a new direction. Because all of you decide it's time for change. And if you do that now, then not only will we finally pass health insurance reform, not only are we finally going to make this an economy that's not reliant on booms and busts and maxed-out credit cards, but instead is reliant on the ingenuity and creativity and hard work of the American people and maintaining steady growth. But we're going to do what earlier generations have done and build something that's better for our children and our grandchildren.

That's our project. That's what the DGA is devoted to doing. That's what this White House is devoted to doing. We're grateful that all of you are partners in that process. Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:20 p.m. at the St. Regis Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Brian D. Schweitzer of Montana; Gov. Martin J. O'Malley of Maryland; Gov. Steven L. Beshear of Kentucky; Gov. Chester J. Culver of Iowa; Gov. John P. deJongh, Jr., of the Virgin Islands; Gov. Jack A. Markell of Delaware; Gov. Jeremiah W. "Jay" Nixon of Missouri; Gov. Mark V. Parkinson of Kansas; and Gov. Beverly E. Perdue of North Carolina.

Remarks on the Natural Disasters in the South Pacific and Indonesia and the Situation in Iran

October 1, 2009

Good afternoon. Before I comment on today's meeting in Geneva, I want to say a few words about the recent tragic events in the Pacific.

On behalf of the American people, I want to once again extend my deepest condolences to the people of American Samoa and Samoa for the terrible loss of life and the devastation that took place after the recent earthquake and tsunami. I've spoken to the Governor and the Delegate from America Samoa, and we continue to provide the full support of the Federal Government for relief efforts there. I have also directed the State Department to provide the

assistance necessary to help Samoa recover as well.

We're also deeply moved by the suffering and the loss of life that's been caused by the recent earthquake in West Sumatra. Now, my administration has been in touch with the Government of Indonesia to make it clear that the United States stands ready to help in this time of need, and I've ordered my administration to coordinate with the ongoing relief and recovery efforts there.

Indonesia is an extraordinary country that's known extraordinary hardship from natural disasters. I know firsthand that Indonesian people are strong and resilient and have the spirit to overcome this enormous challenge. And as they do, they need to know that America will be their friend and partner.

Today in Geneva, the United States, along with our fellow permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, namely Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom, as well as Germany, held talks with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

These meetings came after several months of intense diplomatic effort. Upon taking office, I made it clear that the United States was prepared to join our P–5-plus-1 partners as a full participant in talks with Iran. I extended the offer of meaningful engagement to the Iranian Government. I committed the United States to a comprehensive effort to strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, so that all nations have the right to peaceful nuclear power, provided that they live up to their international obligations.

And we have engaged in intensive bilateral and multilateral diplomacy with our P–5-plus-1 partners, and with nations around the world, to reinforce this point, including a historic U.N. Security Council resolution that was passed unanimously last week.

The result is clear: The P–5-plus-1 is united, and we have an international community that has reaffirmed its commitment to nonproliferation and disarmament. That's why the Iranian Government heard a clear and unified message from the international community in Geneva: Iran must demonstrate through concrete steps that it will live up to its responsibilities with regard to its nuclear program. In pursuit of that goal, today's meeting was a constructive beginning, but it must be followed with constructive action by the Iranian Government.

First, Iran must demonstrate its commitment to transparency. Earlier this month, we presented clear evidence that Iran has been building a covert nuclear facility in Qom. Since Iran has now agreed to cooperate fully and immediately with the International Atomic Energy Agency, it must grant unfettered access to IAEA inspectors within 2 weeks. I've been in close touch with the head of the IAEA, Mohamed ElBaradei, who will be traveling to Tehran in the days ahead. He has my full support, and the Iranian Government must grant the IAEA full access to the site in Qom.

Second, Iran must take concrete steps to build confidence that its nuclear program will serve peaceful purposes, steps that meet Iran's obligations under multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions. The IAEA proposal that was agreed to in principle today with regard to the Tehran research reactor is a confidence-building step that is consistent with that objective, provided that it transfers Iran's low enriched uranium to a third country for fuel fabrication. As I've said before, we support Iran's right to peaceful nuclear power. Taking the step of transferring its low enriched uranium to a third country would be a step towards building confidence that Iran's program is in fact peaceful.

Going forward, we expect to see swift action. We're committed to serious and meaningful engagement. But we're not interested in talking for the sake of talking. If Iran does not take steps in the near future to live up to its obligations, then the United States will not continue to negotiate indefinitely, and we are prepared to move towards increased pressure. If Iran takes concrete steps and lives up to its obligations, there is a path towards a better relationship with the United States, increased integration for Iran within the international community, and a better future for all Iranians.

So let me reiterate: This is a constructive beginning, but hard work lies ahead. We've entered a phase of intensive international negotiations. And talk is no substitute for action. Pledges of cooperation must be fulfilled. We have

made it clear that we will do our part to engage the Iranian Government on the basis of mutual interests and mutual respect, but our patience is not unlimited.

This is not about singling out Iran. This is not about creating double standards. This is about the global nonproliferation regime and Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy, just as all nations have it, but with that right comes responsibilities. The burden of meeting these responsibilities lies with the Iranian Government, and they are now the ones that need to make that choice.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:22 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Togiola T.A. Tulafono and Delegate Eni F.H. Faleomavaega of American Samoa.

Statement on the Anniversary of the Birth of Mahatma Gandhi
October 1, 2009

On behalf of the American people, I want to express appreciation for the life and lessons of Mahatma Gandhi on the anniversary of his birth. This is an important moment to reflect on his message of nonviolence, which continues to inspire people and political movements across the globe.

We join the people of India in celebrating this great soul who lived a life dedicated to the cause of advancing justice, showing tolerance to all, and creating change through nonviolent resistance.

Americans owe an enormous measure of gratitude to the Mahatma. His teachings and ideals, shared with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on his 1959 pilgrimage to India, transformed American society through our civil rights movement. The America of today has its roots in the India of Mahatma Gandhi and the nonviolent social action movement for Indian independence which he led.

Tomorrow, as we remember the Mahatma on his birthday, we must renew our commitment to live his ideals and to celebrate the dignity of all human beings.

Remarks to the International Olympic Committee in Copenhagen, Denmark
October 2, 2009

President Rogge, ladies and gentlemen of the International Olympic Committee: I come here today as a passionate supporter of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, as a strong believer in the movement they represent, and as a proud Chicagoan. But above all, I come as a faithful representative of the American people, and we look forward to welcoming the world to the shores of Lake Michigan and the heartland of our Nation in 2016.

To host athletes and visitors from every corner of the globe is a high honor and a great responsibility. And America is ready and eager to assume that sacred trust. We're a nation that has always opened its arms to the citizens of the world—including my own father from the African Continent—people who have sought something better, who have dreamed of something bigger.

I know you face a difficult choice among several great cities and nations with impressive bids of their own. So I've come here today to urge you to choose Chicago for the same reason I chose Chicago nearly 25 years ago, the reason I fell in love with the city I still call home. And it's not just because it's where I met the woman you just heard from, although after getting to know her this week, I know you'll all agree that she's a pretty big selling point for the city.

You see, growing up, my family moved around a lot. I was born in Hawaii. I lived in Indonesia for a time. I never really had roots in any one place or culture or ethnic group. And then I came to Chicago. And on those

Chicago streets, I worked alongside men and women who were Black and White, Latino and Asian, people of every class and nationality and religion. I came to discover that Chicago is that most American of American cities, but one where citizens from more than 130 nations inhabit a rich tapestry of distinctive neighborhoods.

Each one of those neighborhoods—from Greektown to the Ukrainian Village, from Devon to Pilsen to Washington Park—has its own unique character, its own unique history, its songs, its language. But each is also part of our city—one city—a city where I finally found a home.

Chicago is a place where we strive to celebrate what makes us different, just as we celebrate what we have in common. It's a place where our unity is on colorful display at so many festivals and parades, and especially sporting events, where perfect strangers become fast friends just because they're wearing the same jersey. It's a city that works, from its first World's Fair more than a century ago to the World Cup we hosted in the nineties, we know how to put on big events. And scores of visitors and spectators will tell you that we do it well.

Chicago is a city where the practical and the inspirational exist in harmony, where visionaries who made no small plans rebuilt after a great fire and taught the world to reach new heights. It's a bustling metropolis with the warmth of a small town, where the world already comes together every day to live and work and reach for a dream, a dream that no matter who we are, where we come from, no matter what we look like or what hand life has dealt us, with hard work and discipline and dedication, we can make it if we try.

That's not just the American Dream; that is the Olympic spirit. It's the essence of the Olympic spirit. And that's why we see so much of ourselves in these games. That's why we want them in Chicago. That's why we want them in America.

Now, we stand at a moment in history when the fate of each nation is inextricably linked to the fate of all nations, a time of common challenges that require common effort. And I ran for President because I believed deeply that at this defining moment, the United States of America has a responsibility to help in that effort, to forge new partnerships with the nations and the peoples of the world.

And no one expects the games to solve all our collective challenges. But what we do believe, what each and every one of you believe and what all of the Chicago delegation believes, is that in a world where we've all too often witnessed the darker aspects of our humanity, peaceful competition between nations represents what's best about our humanity. It brings us together, if only for a few weeks, face to face. It helps us understand one another just a little bit better. It reminds us that no matter how or where we differ, we all seek our own measure of happiness and fulfillment and pride in what we do. That's a very powerful starting point for progress.

Nearly 1 year ago, on a clear November night, people from every corner of the world gathered in the city of Chicago or in front of their televisions to watch the results of the U.S. Presidential election. Their interest wasn't about me as an individual, rather, it was rooted in the belief that America's experiment in democracy still speaks to a set of universal aspirations and ideals. Their interest sprung from the hope that in this ever-shrinking world, our diversity could be a source of strength, a cause for celebration; and that with sustained work and determination, we could learn to live and prosper together during the fleeting moment we share on this Earth.

Now, that work is far from over, but it has begun in earnest. And while we do not know what the next few years will bring, there is nothing I would like more than to step just a few blocks from my family's home, with Michelle and our two girls, and welcome the world back into our neighborhood.

At the beginning of this new century, the Nation that has been shaped by people from around the world wants a chance to inspire it once more: to ignite the spirit of possibility at the heart of the Olympic and Paralympic movement in a new generation; to offer a stage worthy of the extraordinary talent and dynamism offered by nations joined together; to host games that unite us in noble competition and

shared celebration of our limitless potential as a people.

And so I urge you to choose Chicago; I urge you to choose America. And if you do, if we walk this path together, then I promise you this: The city of Chicago and the United States of America will make the world proud. Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:27 a.m. in the Bella Center. In his remarks, he referred to Jacques Rogge, president, International Olympic Committee. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks at a Question-and-Answer Session With Members of the International Olympic Committee in Copenhagen
October 2, 2009

[*The question-and-answer session was joined in progress.*]

Patrick G. Ryan. The next question relates to—comes from Mr. Ali, and thank you for the question. How do we intend to deal with all of the millions of people who will enter? And I'd like Lori Healey to answer that question, please.

Lori T. Healey. Thank you, and thank you for the question. We are very fortunate, as evidenced by the presence of the President and the First Lady here today, to have a terrifically strong partnership with the Federal Government in Washington. We've worked very closely with the U.S. State Department. Secretary Clinton has also been a very good partner and has worked to assure everyone the full cooperation of the Federal Government. Additionally, in June, the White House announced the formation of the Office of Olympic, Paralympic, and Youth Sport that will act as the coordinating agency if we are so privileged to be selected for the right to host the games, to put all the forces of the Federal Government behind that.

Mr. Ryan. If President Obama would like to add to that, please.

The President. First, emphasize what Lori said in response to Mr. Ali's question. One of the legacies I want to see coming out of the Chicago 2016 hosting of the games is a reminder that America at its best is open to the world. And as has already been indicated, we are putting the full force of the White House and the State Department to make sure that not only is this a successful games, but that visitors from all around the world feel welcome and will come away with a sense of the incredible diversity of the American people.

And I'm very impressed with part of the presentation that we made matching up host families for the athletes who are going to be there, because, as I said, Chicago, we've got everybody. This could be a meeting in Chicago, because we look like the world. And I think that over the last several years, sometimes that fundamental truth about the United States has been lost. And one of the legacies, I think, of this Olympics Games in Chicago would be a restoration of that understanding of what the United States is all about, and the United States recognition of how we are linked to the world.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:51 a.m. in the Bella Center. In his remarks, he referred to Syed Shahid Ali, member, International Olympic Committee. Participating in the question-and-answer session were Patrick G. Ryan, chairman and chief executive officer, and Lori T. Healey, president, Chicago 2016. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen of Denmark in Copenhagen
October 2, 2009

Prime Minister Rasmussen. So, Mr. President, welcome to Copenhagen. We have had the pleasure of your lovely wife's company for the last 2 days, and I am, indeed, very proud and honored and happy that you also found your time to stop by.

I realize that you are here to support the bid for Chicago's Olympic Games 2016. In that regard, I wish you the very best. And I hope you will be successful and you will enjoy your visit to such an extent that you will return very soon.

We have a long-lasting friendship. We have common values. We have a lot of common issues to discuss. And I'm really looking forward to discussing some of these issues on our common agenda.

So once again, Mr. President, welcome to Copenhagen.

President Obama. Well, thank you so much, Mr. Prime Minister. Thank you for your hospitality and the hospitality of the people of Denmark. We have had obviously a remarkable time in the last 2 days. Michelle has been just so thrilled to be interacting with the people of Denmark. Unfortunately, my stay has not been so long, but I hope that I'll be able to return. I've been here before, and I love the city.

I want to say that, as the Prime Minister indicated, the relationship between the United States and Denmark has always been strong. We share common values. We have worked together on a whole range of international matters of great importance.

Something that obviously is pressing now is the issue of climate change, and Prime Minister Rasmussen has been a great leader on this issue. We've had occasion of discussing this in the context of the G–8, as well as the recent U.N. General Assembly meeting, and Secretary Ban Ki-moon organized a dinner in which the Prime Minister participated. The upcoming meeting here in Copenhagen around climate change is something that we are keenly interested in, and I'm looking forward to discussions in depth about how we can move that process forward. So we appreciate your leadership.

I should add that we are grateful generally for the sacrifices of the people of Denmark with respect to our efforts in Afghanistan. They are very difficult, but Denmark is a country that has consistently, I think, been willing to sacrifice both time, resources, and obviously, most importantly, personnel in the broad efforts there to stabilize the country. And we're grateful for that as well.

And finally, I want to thank the royal family and Her Majesty for the extraordinary hospitality that she's shown since we've been here.

So I thank the people of Denmark. I thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, for hosting us. And I'm looking forward to a fruitful conversation and continued strengthening of the bond between the United States and your country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:08 a.m. at Christiansborg Palace. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations; and Queen Margrethe II of Denmark.

Remarks on Arrival From Copenhagen
October 2, 2009

One of the things that I think is most valuable about sports is that you can play a great game and still not win. And so although I wish that we had come back with better news from Copenhagen, I could not be prouder of my hometown of Chicago, the volunteers who were involved, Mayor Daley, the delegation, and the American people for the extraordinary bid that we put forward.

I do want to congratulate Rio de Janeiro and the nation of Brazil for winning the 2016 Olympics. I think this is a truly historic event, as

these will be the first Olympic Games ever to be held in South America. And as neighbors in the Americas, as friends to the Brazilian people, we welcome this extraordinary sign of progress and the fact that the 2016 games will be in the Americas. I had a chance to talk to President Lula and gave him a hearty congratulations and told him that our athletes will see him on the field of competition in 2016.

Again, I want to thank everybody who worked so hard to put America's bid together—not just Mayor Daley and the delegation—Pat Ryan—but most especially the thousands of Chicagoans who volunteered over these past few years. They put in their heart and soul into this bid. I have no doubt that it was the strongest bid possible, and I'm proud that I was able to come in and help make that case in person. I believe it's always a worthwhile endeavor to promote and boost the United States of America and invite the world to come see what we're all about. We, obviously, would have been eager to host these games, but as I said, this Nation and our athletes are still very much excited to compete in 2016. And we once again want to just say how much we are committed to the Olympic spirit, which I think represents some of the best of humanity.

I also want to say a few words about the unemployment numbers that came out today. As I've said before, my principle focus each and every day, as well as the principle focus of my economic team, is putting our Nation back on the path to prosperity. And since the period last winter, when we were losing an average of 700,000 jobs per month, we've certainly made some progress on this front. But today's job report is a sobering reminder that progress comes in fits and starts and that we're going to need to grind out this recovery step by step.

From the moment I took office, I've made the point that employment is often the last thing to come back after a recession. And that's what history shows us. But our task is to do everything we can possibly do to accelerate that process. And I want to let every single American know that I will not let up until those who are seeking work can find work, until businesses that are seeking credit are able to get credit and thrive, until all responsible homeowners can stay in their homes.

That's our ultimate goal, and it's one that we are working every single day here in the White House to accomplish, whether it involves implementing the Recovery Act that's already helped to bring back America from the brink of a much worse situation or lowering the cost of health care for businesses and families. And that's why I'm working closely with my economic advisers to explore any and all additional options and measures that we might take to promote job creation.

Whenever I see statistics like the one we saw today, my mind turns to the people behind them: honest, decent Americans who want nothing more than the opportunity to contribute to their country and help build a better future for themselves and their families. And building a 21st-century economy that offers this opportunity—an economy where folks can receive the skills and education they need to compete for the jobs of the future—will not happen overnight. But we will build it. Of that I am both confident and determined. And on behalf of every American, I will continue in that effort each and every day for as long as I am in this White House.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:27 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil; and Patrick G. Ryan, chairman and chief executive officer, Chicago 2016.

Statement on Senate Action on Health Care Reform Legislation
October 2, 2009

Thanks to the unyielding commitment of Senator Baucus and members of the Senate Finance Committee, we have reached another milestone in our effort to pass health insurance reform. Over the past 2 weeks, the committee has engaged in long hours of thoughtful

deliberation and vigorous debate. They have considered hundreds of amendments and incorporated many of the best ideas from both parties. And they have shown a spirit of civility, a seriousness of purpose, and a willingness to compromise that embodies our democratic process at its very best.

The Finance Committee's work is the culmination of tireless efforts over the better part of this year by the five committees and many Members of Congress involved in health reform: holding numerous hearings and bipartisan meetings; reaching out to stakeholders across the spectrum; and striving to find common ground. As a result of this work, we are now closer than ever before to finally passing reform that will offer security to those who have coverage and affordable insurance to those who don't. We have a long way to go, but I am confident that as we move forward, we will continue to engage with each other as productively as the members of the Finance Committee and will get reform passed this year.

The President's Weekly Address
October 3, 2009

When I took office 8 months ago, our Nation was in the midst of an economic crisis unlike any we'd seen in generations. While I was confident that our economy would recover, we knew that employment is often the last thing to come back after a recession. Our task is to do everything we possibly can to accelerate that process. And we've certainly made progress on this front since the period last winter when we were losing an average of 700,000 jobs each month. But yesterday's report on September job losses was a sobering reminder that progress comes in fits and starts and that we will need to grind out this recovery step by step.

That's why I'm working closely with my economic team to explore additional options to promote job creation. And I won't let up until those who seek jobs can find them, until businesses that seek capital and credit can thrive, and until all responsible homeowners can stay in their homes.

It won't be easy. It will require us to lay a new foundation for our economy; one that gives our workers the skills and education they need to compete, that invests in renewable energy and the jobs of the future, and that makes health care affordable for families and businesses, particularly small businesses, many of which have been overwhelmed by rising health care costs.

This is something I hear about from entrepreneurs I meet, people who've got a good idea and the expertise and determination to build it into a thriving business. But many can't take that leap because they can't afford to lose the health insurance they have at their current job.

I hear about it from small-business owners who want to grow their companies and hire more people, but they can't because they can barely afford to insure the employees they have. One small-business owner wrote to me that health care costs are, and I quote, "stifling my business growth." He said that the money he wanted to use for research and development and to expand his operations has instead been "thrown into the pocket of health care insurance carriers."

These small businesses are the mom-and-pop stores and restaurants, beauty shops and construction companies that support families and sustain communities. They're the small startups with big ideas, hoping to be the next Google or Apple or HP. Altogether, they create roughly half of all new jobs.

And right now they are paying up to 18 percent more for the very same insurance plans as larger businesses because they have higher administrative costs and less bargaining power. Many have been forced to cut benefits or drop coverage; some have shed jobs or shut their doors entirely. And recent studies show that if we fail to act now, employers will pay 6 percent more to insure their employees next year and more than twice as much over the next decade.

Rising health care costs are undermining our businesses, exploding our deficits, and costing our Nation more jobs with each passing month. So we know that reforming our health

insurance system will be a critical step in rebuilding our economy so that our entrepreneurs can pursue the American Dream again and our small businesses can grow and expand and create new jobs again.

That's precisely what the reform legislation before Congress right now will do. Under these proposals, small businesses will be able to purchase health insurance through an insurance exchange, a marketplace where they can compare the price, quality, and services of a wide variety of plans, many of which will provide better coverage at lower costs than the plans they have now.

Ninety-five percent of small businesses won't be required to cover their employees, but many that do will receive a tax credit to help them pay for it. If a small business chooses not to provide coverage, its employees will receive tax credits to help them purchase health insurance on their own through the insurance exchange.

And no matter how you get your insurance, insurance companies will no longer be allowed to deny your coverage because of a preexisting condition. They won't be able to drop your coverage if you get too sick, or lose your job, or change jobs. And we'll limit the amount your insurance company can force you to pay out of your own pocket.

By now, the urgency of these reforms is abundantly clear. And after long hours of thoughtful deliberation and tough negotiation, the Senate Finance Committee, the final congressional committee involved in shaping health care legislation, has finished the process of crafting their reform proposal.

As we move forward in the coming weeks, I understand that Members of Congress from both parties will want to engage in a vigorous debate and contribute their own ideas. And I welcome those contributions. I welcome any sincere attempts to improve legislation before it reaches my desk. But what I will not accept are attempts to stall or drag our feet. I will not accept partisan efforts to block reform at any cost.

Instead, I expect us to move forward with a spirit of civility, a seriousness of purpose, and a willingness to compromise that characterizes our democratic process at its very best. If we do that, I am confident that we will pass reform this year and help ensure that our entrepreneurs, our businesses, and our economy can thrive in the years ahead. Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:15 p.m. on October 2 in the Library at the White House for broadcast on October 3. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 2, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on October 3.

Remarks on Health Care Reform
October 5, 2009

Thank you. Please, have a seat on this spectacular day here in the Rose Garden. I want to welcome all the doctors who have joined us today at the White House. But there are a couple that I want to make special mention of.

First of all, on stage behind me: Dr. Hershey Garner, Dr. Mona Mangat, Dr. Richard Evans, and Dr. Amanda McKinney, who are representing, as we were talking about in the Oval Office, red States, blue States, recalcitrant States—[*laughter*]—high-cost States, low-cost States, rural, and urban States. And so we're so pleased to have them.

In addition, the organizations that are represented here today: the American Medical Association, the National Medical Association, the Family Physicians, the American College of Physicians, the Doctors for America, American College of Pediatrics, and American College of Cardiology. I am thrilled to have all of you here today and you look very spiffy in your coats. [*Laughter*]

All of you represent all 50 States. Some of you are members of physicians' organizations, and others are simply respected members of their community who work in hospitals and clinics and private practices. All have devoted

their lives to the healing of others. And all understand that their jobs would be a lot easier if we finally reformed our system of health insurance.

Now, we have now been debating this issue of health insurance reform for months. The United States Congress has been working on it for better—for the better part of a year, and last week the final congressional committee involved in shaping legislation completed their proposal and will soon vote on it. At this point, we've heard all the arguments on both sides of the aisle. We have listened to every charge and every counter-charge, from the crazy claims about death panels to misleading warnings about a Government takeover of our health care system.

But when you cut through all the noise and all the distractions that are out there, I think, what's most telling is that some of the people who are most supportive of reform are the very medical professionals who know the health care system best: the doctors and nurses of America.

Now, these men and women here would not be supporting health insurance reform if they really believed that it would lead to Government bureaucrats making decisions that are best left to doctors. They wouldn't be here today if they believed that reform in any way would damage the very critical and sacred doctor-patient relationship.

Instead, the reason these doctors are here is because they have seen firsthand what's broken about our health care system. They've seen what happens when their patients can't get the care they need because some insurance company has decided to drop their coverage or water it down. They've seen what happens when a patient is forced to pay out of pocket thousands of dollars she doesn't have for treatments that she desperately needs. They've seen what happens when patients don't come in for regular checkups or screenings because either their insurance company doesn't cover it or they can't afford insurance in the first place. And they've seen far too much of time that they want to devote to taking care of patients spent filling out forms and haggling with insurance companies about payments.

So these doctors know what needs to be fixed about our health care system. And they know that health insurance reform will do, that it will go a long way towards making patients healthier and doctors and nurses to be able to perform that—those tasks that are so important to them and led them into medicine in the first place.

So let me just outline once again what exactly we're seeing coming out of all these committees. And although there are still some details to be worked out, there are some general principles that I think we can have confidence on.

Number one, if you have insurance, the reforms we've proposed will offer you more security. It will be against the law for insurance companies to deny you coverage because of a preexisting condition. It will be against the law for insurance companies to drop your coverage when you get sick or water it down when you need it most. Insurance companies will no longer be able to place some arbitrary cap on how much coverage you can receive in a given year or a given lifetime—or in a lifetime. We will place a limit on how much you can be charged for out-of-pocket expenses. And insurance companies will be required to cover, at no extra charge, routine checkups and preventive care.

Now, if you don't have health insurance, reform will finally offer you affordable choices. We'll set up a new insurance exchange, a marketplace where individuals and small businesses can shop for an affordable health insurance plan that works for them. This is how everyone in the Federal Government, including Members of Congress, get affordable insurance. And there's no reason we shouldn't give every American the same opportunity that we give ourselves.

Now, these doctors also know that reform will make their lives easier. By moving to electronic medical records, in a system carefully constructed to protect patient privacy, physicians will have less paperwork to fill out, more critical information at their fingertips, and more time to spend with their patients, and—[*applause*]—expensive tests won't have to be repeated over and over again.

There are also proposals to provide loan forgiveness for primary care physicians who choose to practice in rural and underserved areas. Since I've talked to enough doctors who

feel they're forced to practice defensive medicine, I've also directed my Secretary of Health and Human Services to move forward with programs that will help us put patient safety first while still allowing doctors to focus on practicing medicine. And we are working to fix the flawed sustainable growth rate formula by which doctors are reimbursed under Medicare.

Every one of you here today took an oath when you entered the medical profession. It was not an oath that you would spend a lot of time on the phone with insurance companies. [*Laughter*] It was not an oath that you would have to turn away patients who you know could use your help. You did not devote your lives to be bean counters or paper pushers. You took an oath so that you could heal people. You did it so you could save lives.

The reforms we're proposing to our health care system will help you live up to that oath. They will make sure that neither some Government bureaucrat or insurance company bureaucrat gets between a patient and their doctor. And they'll offer security to those Americans who have insurance and insurance to those who don't.

And I want to thank every single doctor who is here, and I especially want to thank you for agreeing to fan out across the country and make the case about why this reform effort is so desperately needed. You are the people who know this system best. You are the experts. Nobody has more credibility with the American people on this issue than you do.

And so if you're willing to speak out strongly on behalf of the things you care about and what you see each and every day as you're serving patients all across the country, I'm confident we are going to get health reform passed this year.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:17 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Hershey Garner, radiation oncologist, Fayetteville, AR; Mona Mangat, allergy/immunology, internal medicine, and pediatrics specialist, St. Petersburg, FL; Richard A. Evans, president of the medical staff, Mayo Regional Hospital, Dover-Foxcroft, ME; Amanda E. McKinney, obstetrican and gynecologist, Beatrice, NE; and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius.

Remarks at the National Counterterrorism Center in McLean, Virginia
October 6, 2009

Thank you so much, Mike, for the introduction. Usually, it's Mike who comes to brief me at the White House. Today it's my honor to visit you in your house. I was just told this is called the "bat cave." Is that correct? [*Laughter*] Mike, thank you for your many years of public service and your outstanding leadership at the National Counterterrorism Center.

It is great to be with all of you. It is great to be here at the hub, at the headquarters of our efforts to defend America from those who threaten our country and so many others. Our intelligence community is comprised of 16 organizations. We have countless Federal and State and local and international partners. And this is where it has to all come together.

So I'm pleased to see Denny Blair and those of you from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. We have folks here from the FBI and the CIA. We have folks from across the Federal Government: intelligence, law enforcement, homeland security, and so many others. My understanding is we've even got some of New York's finest, some NYPD folks who are here.

Standing together and serving together, it's clear for all to see that you are one team, that you are more integrated and more collaborative and more effective than ever before. And you're focused on one defining mission, and that is to protect the United States of America and thwarting terrorist attacks around the world.

Now, I just received an extraordinary briefing from some of your colleagues. I have to tell you, I was surprised to see how young everybody is around here. It is a sign of my age that everybody is starting to look young. But the capacity and the dedication that's on display was remarkable. And look, all of you have some of the most important work that is done in this country. You're doing it. These big screens, I understand, are not just to watch SportsCenter. [*Laughter*]

But I wanted to come here today and take a few minutes just to deliver a simple message, and I delivered it inside, and that is the message of thanks: to say thank you from me, who use your product each and every day to make some very tough decisions, and to thank you on behalf of the American people, who may not even know that you're here but are relying on you each and every day to make sure that their kids get home safely and that when they commute to work it's going to be okay. To think about the profound impact that all of you are having on the day-to-day life of this Nation I think is extraordinary. Your professionalism is essential to protecting this country.

Now, we recently observed the eighth anniversary of that terrible day when terrorists brought so much death and destruction to our shores. And once more we remembered all the lives that were lost. And once more we redoubled our resolve against the extremists who continue to plot against the United States and our allies.

And so we need you more than ever. Our troops and our intelligence officers in the field, our diplomats overseas, our law enforcement here at home, they all depend on you: your analysis, your insights, your ability to work together, across divisions and disciplines, turning information into intelligence and sharing it quickly, in real time, with those who need it.

As I said before, I am one of those consumers of your work product here at NCTC. Every morning I look to you for the latest intelligence. In fact, I think so highly of NCTC that I picked the guy who put NCTC together, John Brennan, as my chief adviser for counterterrorism and homeland security. And by the way, John Brennan is here and doing an outstanding job each and every day. He's also, by the way, I think, responsible for getting this spiffy building up and running.

Now, again, a lot of you are working in some obscurity right now. Few Americans know about the work that you do, and this is how it should be. Your assignments require it, and obviously, you didn't go into this line of work for the fame and glory or the glare of the spotlight. You're in this to serve and protect.

But today I want every American to know about the difference you've made, especially in recent months and days. Because of you and all the organizations you represent, we're making real progress in our core mission to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida and other extremist networks around the world.

We must never lose sight of that goal. That's the principal threat to the American people. That is the threat that led to the creation of this center. And that must be the focus of our efforts to defend the homeland and our allies and defeat extremists abroad.

We know that Al Qaida and its extremist allies threaten us from different corners of the globe, from Pakistan, but also from East Africa and Southeast Asia, from Europe and the Gulf. And that's why we're applying focused and relentless pressure on Al Qaida by sharing more intelligence, strengthening the capacity of our partners, disrupting terrorist financing, cutting off supply chains, and inflicting major losses on Al Qaida's leadership.

It should now be clear: The United States and our partners have sent an unmistakable message. We will target Al Qaida wherever they take root, we will not yield in our pursuit, and we are developing the capacity and the cooperation to deny a safe haven to any who threaten America and its allies.

We also know that success against Al Qaida must go beyond destroying their network; it must be about the future that we want to build as well. And that's why we're putting forward a positive vision of American leadership around the world, one where we lead by example and engage nations and peoples on the basis of mutual interest and mutual respect.

As one counterterrorism expert recently observed, because of our efforts Al Qaida and its

allies have not only lost operational capacity, they've lost legitimacy and credibility. Of course, nobody does a better job of discrediting Al Qaida than Al Qaida itself, which has killed men and women and children of many faiths in many nations and which has absolutely no positive future to offer the people of the world.

So even as we target Al Qaida and its bankrupt vision, we also know that we have to be vigilant in defending our people at home. And that takes aggressive intelligence collection and skillful analysis. And that demands the effective and efficient coordination between Federal Government and our State and local partners.

And that's what we've seen from you in recent years. We've seen your success here in America in the last several weeks. You've stayed vigilant. You watched for signs. You stitched together the intelligence. You've worked together, across organizations, as one team. And then, arrests in Denver and New York, and still more in Illinois and Texas, have made us safer.

So I say to every American: You see the headlines, but here are some of the people who help write them, who keep you safe. And I say to all of you, you are setting the standard. You're showing us what focused and integrated counterterrorism really looks like. And the record of your service is written in the attacks that never occur because you thwarted them and in the countless Americans who are alive today because you saved them. For that, America is in your debt.

Of course, you know that we're facing determined adversaries who are resourceful, who are resilient, and who are still plotting. And no one can ever promise that there won't be another attack on American soil. But I can promise you this: I pledge to do everything in my power as President to keep America safe, and I pledge to give all of you the tools and support you need to get the job done around the world and here at home, and I pledge to stay focused on that mission, just as you stay focused on your mission.

So we all have to redouble our efforts in the face of a threat that persists. We're going to have to draw strength from the values that we hold dear. We must keep our eye fixed on the world we seek to build, one that defeats our adversaries, but that also promotes dignity and opportunity and justice for all who stand with us.

To do that, we need you to keep standing and serving together, every agency, every department, every branch, every level, one team, one mission. That's how we're going to prevail in this fight, and that's how we're going to protect this country that we all love.

So thanks to all of you. Continue the outstanding work. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:34 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Michael E. Leiter, Director, National Counterterrorism Center; and Director of National Intelligence Dennis C. Blair.

Statement on Storm and Flood Damage in the Philippines
October 6, 2009

On behalf of the American people, I want to express my deep condolences for the loss of life and devastation caused by recent storms in the Philippines, particularly Tropical Storm Ketsana. Michelle and I feel great sorrow over the hundreds of people who have died from the storms and resulting flooding and the hundreds of thousands more who have been displaced.

In the spirit of our long history of friendship and cooperation with the Philippines, the United States has been assisting the people of the Philippines. Our military forces and civilian agencies have supported local Philippine

efforts by distributing relief supplies and helped in rescuing victims from inundated areas of Manila. As part of this effort, the U.S. Agency for International Development has so far allocated $1.8 million to respond to the disaster. As a longstanding friend and partner of the Philippines, we stand ready to continue our cooperation and assistance in the coming days.

Remarks on Presenting the National Medals of Science and National Medals of Technology and Innovation

October 7, 2009

Everyone please have a seat. Before I begin the ceremony to introduce these extraordinary innovators, let me just mention a few people who are in the audience today. First of all, we've got some outstanding members of my Cabinet: Secretary Locke, Secretary Sebelius, Secretary Chu, and Administrator Jackson. We are very grateful for all the outstanding work they're doing.

We've got some wonderful partners in Congress that I want to mention: Senator Jeff Merkley of Oregon; Senator Jim Risch of Idaho; Senator—Representative Rush Holt—Rush, I almost gave you a promotion there—[*laughter*]—or a demotion, depending on how you look at it—of New Jersey; Representative Anna Eshoo of California; and Representative Zoe Lofgren of California. I also want to mention my science adviser who's doing outstanding work; Dr. Holdren is here, as well as NASA Administrator Charles Bolden. And we want to thank some of the people who helped to organize today's event: the National Science Foundation and its Director, Arden Bement; the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and its Director, Dave Kappos; and Linda Katehi, the chair of the National Medals of Science and Technology and Innovation Committees. So give all of them a big round of applause.

Now, it's also a real pleasure to have so many distinguished researchers and innovators joining us, although I must admit that I have an ulterior motive for presenting these awards today. You see, Sasha has a science fair coming up, and I was thinking that you guys could give us a few tips. [*Laughter*] Michelle and I are a little rusty on our science.

In all seriousness, it is a privilege to present these medals, our Nation's highest honor for scientific and technological achievement, to the folks who've come here today from all parts of our country and all areas of scientific investigation. The scientists in this room have plumbed the furthest reaches of the universe and the deepest recesses of the human mind; they've sequenced the human genome and stimulated the workings of the atom; they've developed technologies that have greatly improved our understanding of the human body and the natural world; and they've fostered innovations that have saved millions of lives and improved countless more.

So this Nation owes all of you an enormous debt of gratitude far greater than any medal can bestow. And we recognize your contributions, but we also celebrate the incredible contributions of the scientific endeavor itself. We see the promise, not just for our economy, but for our health and well being, in the human capacity for creativity and ingenuity. And we are reminded of the power of free and open inquiry, which is not only at the heart of all of your work, but at the heart of this experiment we call America, because throughout our history, amid tumult and war and against tough odds, this Nation has always looked toward the future and then led the way. It was during the darkest days of the Civil War that President Lincoln established the land-grant colleges and the National Academy of Science. It was during World War II that President Roosevelt requested that Vannevar Bush, his science adviser and a future recipient of the National Medal of Science, outline a set of policies to maintain our scientific and technological leadership in the 20th century.

And it was in the years that followed the Soviet launch of Sputnik, the first artificial satellite to orbit the Earth, that the United States would create DARPA, NASA, and the National

Defense Education Act, which helped improve math and science education from grade school to graduate school. In fact, the National Medal itself was established just 2 years after that launch, as a sign to the world and to ourselves of how highly we valued the work of the Nation's scientists.

And today, we face more complex challenges than generations past: a medical system that holds the promise of unlocking new cures attached to a health care system that has the potential to bankrupt families and businesses; a system of energy that powers our economy, but also endangers our planet; threats to our security that seek to exploit the very interconnectedness and openness that's so essential to our prosperity; and challenges in a global marketplace which link the trader on Wall Street to the homeowner on Main Street and the office worker in America to the factory worker in China. We all share in opportunity, but we also all share in crisis.

At such a difficult moment, there are those who say we can't afford to invest in science, that it's a luxury at a moment defined by necessities. I could not disagree more. Science is more essential for our prosperity, our security and our health, and our way of life than it has ever been. And the winners we are recognizing only underscore that point, with achievements in physics and medicine, computer science and cognitive science, energy technology and biotechnology. We need to ensure that we are encouraging the next generation of discoveries and the next generation of discoverers.

That's why my administration has set this goal: By investing in education, funding basic and applied research, and spurring private innovation, we will devote 3 percent of our gross domestic product to research and development. That's more than at any point in recent history.

And as part of this effort, we're putting in place policies that will move us from the middle to the top of the pack in math and science education over the next decade. We are challenging States to dramatically improve achievement by raising standards, by improving the use of technology, and by making it possible for professionals, like our honorees, to bring a lifetime of experience and enthusiasm into the classroom. And we've also launched a Race to the Top fund to encourage States to compete for the most innovative programs in math and science, as part of a broader effort to foster new ways of engaging young people in these fields.

The White House is participating too. Tonight, in fact, we're bringing children to the South Lawn for a night of astronomy. I am really looking forward to this. This is going to be fun. They'll peer through telescopes, wander through exhibits, and hopefully, feel a sense of wonder that might one day lead them here to receive a medal themselves.

And my administration has set another goal to compete for the jobs of the future and to encourage the scientists and engineers of the future. By 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. We used to be number one; we have fallen behind. We are going to regain our position.

To meet this goal, we've increased the Pell grant and passed legislation through the House, which we're working to pass through the Senate, to end more than $80 billion in wasteful subsidies to lenders and use that money instead to help students.

Beyond the classroom, the Recovery Act that we passed is funding the largest single boost to biomedical research in history. My budget makes the research and experimentation tax credit permanent to help companies afford the often high cost of innovation. I've proposed eliminating the capital gains tax for investments in startups and small companies, because countless big ideas begin in small businesses. And we are doubling our capacity in renewable energy, even as we seek to create a system of incentives to make clean energy the profitable kind of energy in America.

For at our best, this Nation has never feared the future. We've shaped the future. Even when we've endured terrible storms, we haven't given up or turned back. We've remained fixed on that brighter horizon. That's how we've led in the pursuit of scientific discovery. And in turn, that's how science has helped us lead the world.

There's no better illustration than what took place at the close of World War II, when the United States transported dozens of captured V–2 rockets from Germany to New Mexico. These were among the most sophisticated weapons in the world, a reminder that much of World War II was fought far from the battlefield, by Alan Turing in Bletchley Park and Oppenheimer in Los Alamos and by countless others who developed radar and aircraft and antibiotics.

The military wanted to understand this new missile technology that the V–2 represented, but scientists were also invited to use these tests to take measurements of the atmosphere. And then one engineer had an idea to rig a camera and attach it to one of the rockets. And so in this brief moment between the end of a world war and the start of a cold war, a group of scientists erupted with joy as they discovered that they had captured the very first photos of our world as seen from space. Their work would continue as the Rocket and Satellite Research Panel. And after the launch of Sputnik in 1957, the work of this panel would be assumed by a new agency called NASA. The research into these weapons of war would lead to the missions of Mercury and Gemini and Apollo.

That's the incredible promise of the work scientists do every day, like the scientists, researchers and engineers, and innovators we honor with these medals. Yes, scientific progress offers us a chance to achieve prosperity and defend our Nation. It has offered us benefits that have improved our lives and our health, improvements that we often take for granted. But it also gives us something more. At root, science forces us to reckon with the truth as best as we can ascertain it and to reckon with the power that comes from this knowledge, for good and for ill. With each new discovery brings new responsibility to move past our differences and to address our shared problems, to embrace a sense of wonder and our common humanity.

Carl Sagan, who helped broaden the reach of science to millions of people, once described his enthusiasm for discovery in very simple terms. He said, "Somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known." Thank you all for the incredible discoveries that you have made, the progress you've invented, and the benefits you've bestowed on the American people and the world.

So it is now my honor to ask the recipients to come forward to receive their medals, and as their citations are read, I will—you'll just have to bend down a little bit—[*laughter*]—we will bestow on you the highest honor that our Nation can give you for your science, technology, and innovation.

So do we have someone here for the citations?

[*At this point, Lt. Cmdr. Ryan T. Siewert, USCG, Coast Guard Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the medals.*]

Well, that—the ceremony is over, but I think it would be appropriate for everybody to, again, to stand up and give these recipients a big round of applause.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:52 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Commerce Gary F. Locke; Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius; Secretary of Energy Steven Chu; Lisa P. Jackson, Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency; and John P. Holdren, Director, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy; and Linda P.B. Katehi, Chair, President's Committee on the National Medal of Science, and chair, National Medal of Technology and Innovation Nomination Evaluation Committee.

Remarks at a White House Event Celebrating Scientific Exploration
October 7, 2009

The President. I want to welcome all the students and teachers and amateur astronomers to the White House tonight. I won't speak long, because we've got a bunch of telescopes and

great exhibits to get our hands on. But before we begin, let me first acknowledge a few other stars who are out tonight.

First of all, John Holdren, my science adviser, an actual physicist, is here and eager to look through one of these telescopes. Our NASA Administrator, Charles Bolden, who's spent some time orbiting the Earth himself, and his deputy, Lori Garver, are here. Where's Charles and Lori? There're in the back there. Give them a round of applause. We've got some specialists from NASA, the Smithsonian, and the American Museum of Natural History in New York here with us as well.

And we've got some of the heroes who have flown closer to the stars than anybody else. Buzz Aldrin, a man who actually walked on the Moon, where's Buzz? Right there. Sally Ride, the first American woman in space, is here. Mae Jemison, the first African American woman in space, give her a big round of applause. And John Grunsfeld is here, the man they call the "Hubble Repairman," not to be mistaken with the Maytag repairman—[*laughter*]—for all the upgrades that he's made up there to the telescope that allows us to see farther than anyone ever imagined. So give John a big round of applause.

Now, NASA's equipment is some pretty powerful stuff, but astronomy also depends on the curiosity and the contributions of amateur astronomers. And there are two students here tonight who've made some pretty amazing discoveries of their own.

First of all, Caroline Moore and her dad Robert—raise your hand. Where's Dad? There's Robert. They look at the stars together in New York. And last year—think about this—when she was only 14 years old, she became the youngest person ever to discover a supernova, and not just any supernova, but a kind that we may have never seen before. And earlier this year, Lucas Bolyard—Lucas, raise your hand. Where are your folks? Where's Lucas's folks? Raise your hands. I know you guys are proud. A high school sophomore from West Virginia discovered some unusual data that turned out to be an extremely rare kind of star called a pulsar. And Lucas was explaining to me just what a pulsar was so that I wasn't embarrassed when I came out here. [*Laughter*]

Now, if they can discover something great, so can any of you other students who are here tonight. All you need is a passion for science. From the moment humans first walked on this Earth, we've been endlessly fascinated by the stars. As long as we've been around, we've been trying to unlock the mysteries of the universe and figure out our proper place in the cosmos and somehow make sense of it all.

It was 400 years ago this year that Galileo built his first telescope. It was just three times more powerful than the naked eye. But he kept on working on it and improving on it, until he built one 33 times as powerful. And then he turned it towards the sky. And he discovered that our Moon wasn't smooth, that Venus had phases, that Jupiter had moons, and that Copernicus was right that we do revolve around the Sun.

Now, we've come a long way since then. While Galileo's first telescope had lenses an inch wide, the Hubble space telescope has mirrors about 7½ feet wide. A few years ago, the Hubble showed us the deepest image of the universe ever taken. And in that image, we can see about 10,000 galaxies, and each of those galaxies can hold billions of stars. Now that's a lot, but get this: It would take 13 million of those images to map the entire sky. That's how immense it is.

So there are a lot of mysteries left, and there are a lot of problems for you students to solve. And I want to be a President who makes sure you have the teachers and the tools that you need to solve them.

And that's why we're working to reinvigorate math and science in your schools and attract new and qualified math and science teachers into your classrooms, some with lifetimes of experience. That's why we've launched a "Race to the Top" to raise standards and upgrade your curricula and improve teaching and learning in math and science. That's why we're making a college education more affordable, so that by the time many of you graduate in 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. And that's how we'll move

American students to the top of the pack in math and in science over the next decade and guarantee that America will lead the world in discovery in this new century.

But that's going to take more than just what I as President or anybody in government can do; it's going to take each and every one of you students. It'll take your sense of wonder, your passion, your persistence, your willingness to dedicate your lives to the pursuit of discovery. And it's going to take some hard work. Caroline and Lucas didn't just get lucky; they pored over data before they knew what they had found. Galileo worked for years to prove his theories. The Hubble's journey from paper to space took decades, because that's how success is won, by test by test and trial by trial.

Now, this morning, I awarded the National Medals of Science and Technology to individuals who've made extraordinary contributions to the advancement of human knowledge. And here's my question: Which one of you are going to come back here to claim your prize?

Audience members. Me!

The President. I like that. Are you going to find a new star or a cure for a disease? Will you invent the next iPhone or a brand new industry that no one's even dreamed of yet? What will your great discovery be?

Galileo changed the world when he pointed his telescope to the sky, and now it's your turn. We need you to study, do well in school, explore everything from the infinite reaches of space to the microscopic smallness of the atom. We need you to think bigger and to dig deeper and to reach higher, and we need your restless curiosity and your boundless hope and imagination. Our future depends on it.

So don't let anybody tell you that there isn't more to discover. Don't let anybody tell you that there's knowledge that's beyond your reach. There's something out there for each and every one of you to discover. And seeing how it's a beautiful night, and we've got a bunch of telescopes out on the lawn, let's get started together.

All right? So thank you very much, everybody. I'm glad you guys are here. Let's go have some fun. I think I'm going to get the first dibs at looking through one of these telescopes. Is that right, John?

White House Office of Science and Technology Policy Director John P. Holdren. That is absolutely right.

The President. All right, now why don't you explain to us what exactly this telescope is here? What do we got?

Director Holdren. Well, the first thing——

The President. Talk in the mike.

Director Holdren. I'm sorry. [*Laughter*] The first thing to notice is that there are two eyepieces you could look through. The one that is aligned with the barrel of the telescope is just the aimer that points it in the right direction. The eyepiece you want to look in, Mr. President, is the angled one at the bottom. And if you look in there—that's the one—if you look in there, you will see a double-double star in the Constellation Lyra, 160 light years away.

The President. A hundred and sixty light years; that's far away. [*Laughter*]

Director Holdren. That means it takes the light from those stars 160 years to get here. So what you are seeing, Mr. President, happened 160 years ago. But have a look.

The President. A hundred and sixty years ago. Let's take a look. That's pretty far away. [*Laughter*] That's pretty cool. All right.

All right. Outstanding. Well, let's go take a look at everything, right?

Director Holdren. Absolutely.

The President. All right, guys. Have fun.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:07 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 8.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on the United States-India Nuclear Cooperation Approval and Nonproliferation Enhancement Act
October 8, 2009

Dear _____:

I transmit herewith the report required under section 204(c) of the United States-India Nuclear Cooperation Approval and Nonproliferation Enhancement Act, signed into law on October 8, 2008.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to John F. Kerry, chairman, and Richard G. Lugar, ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; and Howard L. Berman, chairmen, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, ranking member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of Wavier Certification Under the Clean Diamond Trade Act
October 8, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

The Clean Diamond Trade Act (Public Law 108–19) (the "Act") authorizes the President to "prohibit the importation into, or exportation from, the United States of any rough diamond, from whatever source, that has not been controlled through the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme." The Act takes effect on the date that the President certifies to the Congress that (1) an applicable waiver that has been granted by the World Trade Organization (WTO) is in effect, or (2) an applicable decision in a resolution adopted by the United Nations Security Council pursuant to Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations is in effect. The Act remains in effect during those periods in which, as certified by the President to the Congress, such an applicable waiver or decision is in effect.

On July 29, 2003, the President certified that the WTO General Council had adopted a decision granting a waiver pursuant to Article IX of the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization concerning the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for rough diamonds. The waiver applies to the United States and other WTO members that requested the waiver and to any WTO member that notifies the WTO of its desire to be covered by the waiver. The waiver was scheduled to have effect from January 1, 2003, through December 31, 2006. On December 19, 2006, the WTO General Council adopted a decision to extend the waiver through December 31, 2012.

I hereby certify that an applicable waiver, within the meaning of the Act, granted by the World Trade Organization has been in effect since January 1, 2003, and will remain in effect through December 31, 2012.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
October 8, 2009.

Remarks on Winning the Nobel Peace Prize
October 9, 2009

Good morning. Well, this is not how I expected to wake up this morning. After I received the news, Malia walked in and said, "Daddy, you won the Nobel Peace Prize, and it is Bo's birthday!" And then Sasha added, "Plus, we have a 3-day weekend coming up."

So it's good to have kids to keep things in perspective.

I am both surprised and deeply humbled by the decision of the Nobel Committee. Let me be clear: I do not view it as a recognition of my own accomplishments, but rather as an affirmation of American leadership on behalf of aspirations held by people in all nations.

To be honest, I do not feel that I deserve to be in the company of so many of the transformative figures who have been honored by this prize, men and women who've inspired me and inspired the entire world through their courageous pursuit of peace.

But I also know that this prize reflects the kind of world that those men and women, and all Americans, want to build, a world that gives life to the promise of our founding documents. And I know that throughout history, the Nobel Peace Prize has not just been used to honor specific achievement, it's also been used as a means to give momentum to a set of causes. And that is why I will accept this award as a call to action, a call for all nations to confront the common challenges of the 21st century.

These challenges can't be met by any one leader or any one nation. And that's why my administration has worked to establish a new era of engagement in which all nations must take responsibility for the world we seek. We cannot tolerate a world in which nuclear weapons spread to more nations and in which the terror of a nuclear holocaust endangers more people. And that's why we've begun to take concrete steps to pursue a world without nuclear weapons, because all nations have the right to pursue peaceful nuclear power, but all nations have the responsibility to demonstrate their peaceful intentions.

We cannot accept the growing threat posed by climate change, which could forever damage the world that we pass on to our children, sowing conflict and famine, destroying coastlines and emptying cities. And that's why all nations must now accept their share of responsibility for transforming the way that we use energy.

We can't allow the differences between peoples to define the way that we see one another. And that's why we must pursue a new beginning among people of different faiths and races and religions, one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect.

We must all do our part to resolve those conflicts that have caused so much pain and hardship over so many years, and that effort must include an unwavering commitment that finally realizes that the rights of all Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace and security in nations of their own.

We can't accept a world in which more people are denied opportunity and dignity that all people yearn for: the ability to get an education and make a decent living, the security that you won't have to live in fear of disease or violence without hope for the future.

And even as we strive to seek a world in which conflicts are resolved peacefully and prosperity is widely shared, we have to confront the world as we know it today. I am the Commander in Chief of a country that's responsible for ending a war and working in another theater to confront a ruthless adversary that directly threatens the American people and our allies. I'm also aware that we are dealing with the impact of a global economic crisis that has left millions of Americans looking for work. These are concerns that I confront every day on behalf of the American people.

Some of the work confronting us will not be completed during my Presidency. Some, like the elimination of nuclear weapons, may not be completed in my lifetime. But I know these challenges can be met so long as it's recognized that they will not be met by one person or one nation alone. This award is not simply about the efforts of my administration, it's about the courageous efforts of people around the world.

And that's why this award must be shared with everyone who strives for justice and dignity, for the young woman who marches silently in the streets on behalf of her right to be heard even in the face of beatings and bullets, for the leader imprisoned in her own home because she refuses to abandon her commitment to democracy, for the soldier who has sacrificed through tour after tour of duty on behalf of someone half a world away, and for all those men and women across the world who sacrifice their safety and their freedom and sometime their lives for the cause of peace.

That has always been the cause of America. That's why the world has always looked to America. And that's why I believe America will continue to lead.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:16 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on Consumer Financial Protection
October 9, 2009

Patricia, thank you so much for sharing your story and doing such a wonderful job. Good afternoon, everybody. Before I start with the—my remarks I want to acknowledge some people who've been working diligently on this issue, in some cases for years. First of all, our Secretary of the Treasury, Tim Geithner, is here. Christina Romer, the Chair of—there she is—of my Council of Economic Advisers, is here; Senator Danny Akaka from Hawaii; Representative Steve Driehaus of Ohio; Representative Walt Minnick of Idaho; Representative Paul Kanjorski of Pennsylvania; Representative Al Green of Texas; Karen Mills, our outstanding Administrator of the Small Business Administration; Sheila Bair, who's been doing a heroic job trying to deal with the banking situation as chairman of the FDIC; Mayor Michael Nutter of Philadelphia; and my national economic adviser, Larry Summers.

And finally, we've got some special guests, some of the finest attorney generals who are fighting against consumer fraud and have been dealing with some of the consequences of the issues that we're discussing here today, I'm proud to have them here: my former seatmate in the Illinois State senate, Attorney General Lisa Madigan; Andrew Cuomo of New York; Martha Coakley of Massachusetts; and Roy Cooper of North Carolina. Please give them all a big round of applause.

Now, for the last several months, this administration's been working with Congress to reform an outdated system of financial regulations and lax oversight that helped lead to last year's crisis. And I want to thank some people here who are working tirelessly on this issue—first of all, Chairman Chris Dodd of the Senate Banking Committee, Chairman Barney Frank of the House Financial Services Committee, Richard Shelby, also of the Senate Banking Committee—for the leadership and enthusiasm that they have shown throughout this process.

Now, part of our reform effort involves putting in place new safeguards that would help prevent the irresponsibility and recklessness of a few from wreaking havoc on our entire financial system. We want to close gaps in regulation, we want to eliminate overlap, and we want to set rules of the road for Wall Street that make fair dealing and honest competition the only way for financial firms to win and prosper.

But a central part of our reform effort is also aimed at protecting Americans who buy financial products and services every day, from mortgages to credit cards. It's true that the crisis we faced was caused in part by people who took on too much debt and took out loans they couldn't afford. But my concern are the millions of Americans who behaved responsibly and yet still found themselves in jeopardy because of the predatory practices of some in the financial industry. These are folks who signed contracts they didn't always understand offered by lenders who didn't always tell the truth. They were lured in by promises of low payments and never made aware of the fine print and hidden fees.

And Secretary Geithner and I just finished meeting with some of these Americans who've joined us here today. And you've already heard from Patricia, who was forced to pay thousands of dollars in interest on a $550 payday loan. And we also had a chance to hear from Susan Chapman, who had excellent payment history until she was contacted by a broker who told her that she could lower the monthly payments on her mortgage. Instead, the loan they sold her ended up increasing her debt, and her principal has now gone up $20,000.

We talked to Karen Cappuccio, who is still fending off foreclosure because her mortgage company duped her into taking out two expensive loans when they had originally promised her one low, fixed-rate mortgage. We talked to Maxine Given, whose bank hit her with four separate overdraft charges because of one mortgage check that they ended up rejecting the very next day. And I should add, by the way, that this is a CPA that we're talking to here. So if it's happening to her, if it's happening to Maxine, then imagine what the rest of us who can barely add are dealing with here. We talked to Andrew Giordano, whose bank made a mistake that cost him $800 in overdraft fees. And when he caught their mistake, the bank only refunded part of the fees.

As we've seen over the last year, abuses like these don't just jeopardize the financial well being of individual Americans; they can threaten the stability of the entire economy. And yet the patchwork system of regulations we have now has failed to prevent these abuses. With seven different Federal agencies each having a role, there's too little accountability, there are too many loopholes, and no single agency whose sole job it is to stand up for people like Patricia, Susan, Maxine, Andrew, and Karen; no one whose chief responsibility it is to stand up for the American consumer and for responsible banks and financial institutions who are having to compete against folks who are not responsible.

So under the reforms we've proposed, that will change. The new consumer financial protection agency that I've asked Congress to create will have just one mission: to look out for the financial interests of ordinary Americans. It will be charged with setting clear rules of the road for consumers and banks, and it will be able to enforce those rules across the board.

This agency will have the power to make certain that consumers get information that is clear and concise—in plain language—so they can compare products and know exactly what they're getting themselves into. It will ensure that banks and other firms can't hide behind these ridiculously confusing contracts, pages and pages of fine print that nobody can figure out. It will have the ability to enforce and build on the credit card reforms we passed earlier this year, so that consumers aren't hit with unfair rate hikes and penalties or hidden charges. It will require brokers to look out for the interests of families if they give advice about mortgages. And it will ensure transparency and fair dealing for other financial products, like bank overdraft services and payday loans.

In a financial system that's never been more complicated, it has never been more important to have a watchdog function like the one we've proposed. And yet predictably, a lot of the banks and big financial firms don't like the idea of a consumer agency very much. In fact, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is spending millions on an ad campaign to kill it. You might have seen some of these ads, the ones that claim that local butchers and other small businesses somehow will be harmed by this agency. This is, of course, completely false, and we've made clear that only businesses that offer financial services would be affected by this agency. I don't know how many of your butchers are offering financial services. [*Laughter*]

Contrary to what some have argued, this agency would not restrict consumer choice and innovation. Nothing could be further from the truth. In the past, a lack of clear rules led to innovation of the wrong kind: The firms that did best were the ones who did the best job of hiding the real cost to consumers. We don't want them competing by figuring out how much they can fool ordinary Americans. By contrast, the consumer agency we're proposing would set ground rules so that firms don't have to compete to confuse families, but they have to compete to give them better choices. This will also help small-business entrepreneurs who often rely on credit cards and home equity loans to finance their startup businesses.

All this hasn't stopped the big financial firms and their lobbyists from mobilizing against change. They're doing what they always do, descending on Congress, using every bit of influence they have to maintain the status quo that has maximized their profits at the expense of American consumers, despite the fact that recently a whole bunch of those same American consumers bailed them out as a consequence of the bad decisions that they made. And since

they're worried they may not be able to kill this agency, they're trying their hardest to weaken it, by asking for exemptions from this agency's rules and enforcement, by fighting to keep every gap and loophole they can find.

They're very good at this, because that's how business has been done in Washington for a very long time. In fact, over the last 10 years, the chamber alone spent nearly half a billion dollars on lobbying—half a billion dollars.

And the stories we heard today, they remind us that the American people can't afford business as usual any longer. These Americans can't afford high-priced lobbyists to argue their case. They're counting on us to be their advocates, to be their voice, to restore a sense of responsibility from Wall Street to Washington. That's why we need a consumer financial protection agency that will stand up not for big banks, not for financial firms, but for hard-working Americans. And that's why we need regulatory reform that will reward innovation and competition instead of shortcuts and abuses. That's why we can't let special interests win this fight.

We've already seen and lived the consequences of what happens when there's too little accountability on Wall Street and too little protection for Main Street, and I will not allow this country to go back there. It is time for us to move forward. It is time for real change. And I'm confident that we're going to get it done, with the help of all the people who are here today, and, most importantly, with the help of the American people, who are going to demand a better deal from their financial services.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:37 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Patricia Nelson, retired nursing home aid, who introduced the President; Lawrence H. Summers, Director, National Economic Council; Susan Chapman, administrative assistant, College of Staten Island, NY; Karen Cappuccio, Transportation Security Administration supervisor, Lehigh Valley Airport, PA; Maxine Given, senior director of finance and administration, Fund for John Hopkins Medicine, MD; and Andrew Giordano, retired police officer, Locust Point, MD. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Canonization of Father Damien De Veuster
October 9, 2009

I wish to express my deep admiration for the life of Blessed Damien De Veuster, who will be canonized on Sunday by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. I also want to convey my best wishes to the Kingdom of Belgium and its people, who are proud to count Fr. Damien among their great citizens.

Fr. Damien has also earned a special place in the hearts of Hawaiians. I recall many stories from my youth about his tireless work there to care for those suffering from leprosy who had been cast out. Following in the steps of Jesus' ministry to the lepers, Fr. Damien challenged the stigmatizing effects of disease, giving voice to the voiceless and, ultimately, sacrificing his own life to bring dignity to so many.

In our own time as millions around the world suffer from disease, especially the pandemic of HIV/AIDS, we should draw on the example of Fr. Damien's resolve in answering the urgent call to heal and care for the sick.

I offer my prayers as people of all faiths join the Holy Father and millions of Catholics around the world in celebrating Fr. Damien's extraordinary life and witness.

The President's Weekly Address
October 10, 2009

The historic movement to bring real, meaningful health insurance reform to the American people gathered momentum this week as we approach the final days of this debate. Having worked on this issue for the better part of a year, the Senate Finance Committee is finishing deliberations on their version of a health insurance reform bill that will soon be merged with other reform bills produced by other congressional committees.

After evaluating the Finance Committee's bill, the Congressional Budget Office, an office that provides independent, nonpartisan analysis, concluded that the legislation would make coverage affordable for millions of Americans who don't have it today. It will bring greater security to Americans who have coverage with new insurance protections. And, by attacking waste and fraud within the system, it will slow the growth in health care costs without adding a dime to our deficits. This is another milestone on what's been a long, hard road toward health insurance reform.

In recent months, we've heard every side of every argument from both sides of the aisle, and rightly so. Health insurance reform is a complex and critical issue that deserves a vigorous national debate, and we've had one. The approach that is emerging includes the best ideas from Republicans and Democrats and people across the political spectrum.

In fact, what's remarkable is not that we've had a spirited debate about health insurance reform, but the unprecedented consensus that has come together behind it. This consensus encompasses everyone from doctors and nurses to hospitals and drug manufacturers.

And earlier this week, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger of California and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg came out in support of reform, joining two former Republican Senate majority leaders: Bob Dole and Dr. Bill Frist, himself a cardiac surgeon. Dr. Louis Sullivan, Secretary of Health and Human Services under President George H.W. Bush, supports reform, as does Republican Tommy Thompson, a former Wisconsin Governor and Secretary of Health and Human Services under President George W. Bush. These distinguished leaders understand that health insurance reform isn't a Democratic issue or a Republican issue, but an American issue that demands a solution.

Still, there are some in Washington today who seem determined to play the same old partisan politics, working to score political points, even if it means burdening this country with an unsustainable status quo: a status quo of rising health care costs that are crushing our families, our businesses, and our government; a status quo of diminishing coverage that's denying millions of hard-working Americans the insurance they need; a status quo that gives big insurance companies the power to make arbitrary decisions about your health care. That's a status quo I reject and that's a status quo the American people reject.

The distinguished former congressional leaders who urged us to act on health insurance reform spoke of the historic moment at hand and reminded us that this moment will not soon come again. They called on members of both parties to seize this opportunity to finally confront a problem that has plagued us for far too long.

That is what we are called to do at this moment. That is the spirit of national purpose that we must summon right now. Now is the time to rise above the politics of the moment. Now is the time to come together as Americans. Now is the time to meet our responsibilities to ourselves and to our children and secure a better, healthier future for generations to come. That future is within our grasp. So let's go finish the job.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 12 p.m. on October 9 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for

broadcast on October 10. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 9, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on October 10. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the Human Rights Campaign Annual Dinner
October 10, 2009

The President. Thank you, everybody. Please, you're making me blush. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. We love you, Barack!

The President. I love you back!

To Joe Solmonese, who's doing an outstanding job on behalf of HRC; to my great friend and supporter Terry Bean, cofounder of HRC; Representative Patrick Kennedy; David Huebner, the Ambassador-designee to New Zealand and Samoa; John Berry, our Director of OPM, who's doing a great job; Nancy Sutley, chairman of Council on Environmental Quality; Fred Hochberg, chairman of Export-Import Bank; and my dear friend Tipper Gore, who's in the house.

Thank you so much, all of you. It is a privilege to be here tonight to open for Lady Gaga—[*laughter*]—I've made it. [*Laughter*] I want to thank the Human Rights Campaign for inviting me to speak and for the work you do every day in pursuit of equality on behalf of the millions of people in this country who work hard in their jobs and care deeply about their families and who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.

For nearly 30 years, you've advocated on behalf of those without a voice. That's not easy. For despite the real gains that we've made, there's still laws to change, and there's still hearts to open. There are still fellow citizens, perhaps neighbors, even loved ones, good and decent people, who hold fast to outworn arguments and old attitudes, who fail to see your families like their families, who would deny you the rights most Americans take for granted. And that's painful, and it's heartbreaking. And yet you continue, leading by the force of the arguments you make and by the power of the example that you set in your own lives as parents and friends, as PTA members and church members, as advocates and leaders in your communities. And you're making a difference.

That's the story of the movement for fairness and equality and not just for those who are gay, but for all those in our history who've been denied the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, for all who've been told that the full blessings and opportunities of this country were closed to them. It's the story of progress sought by those with little influence or power, by men and women who brought about change through quiet, personal acts of compassion and defiance wherever and whenever they could.

It's the story of the Stonewall protests, when a group of citizens with a few options—[*applause*]—when a group of citizens with few options and fewer supporters stood up against discrimination and helped to inspire a movement. It's the story of an epidemic that decimated a community and the gay men and women who came to support one another and save one another, who continue to fight this scourge, who have demonstrated before the world that different kinds of families can show the same compassion in a time of need. And it's the story of the Human Rights Campaign and the fights you've fought for nearly 30 years, helping to elect candidates who share your values, standing against those who would enshrine discrimination into our Constitution, advocating on behalf of those living with HIV/AIDS, and fighting for progress in our Capital and across America.

This story, this fight, continues now, and I'm here with a simple message: I'm here with you in that fight. For even as we face extraordinary challenges as a nation, we cannot and we will not put aside issues of basic equality. I greatly appreciate the support I've received from many in this room. I also appreciate that many of you don't believe progress has come fast enough. I want to be honest about that, because it's important to be honest among friends.

Now, I've said this before, I'll repeat it again: It's not for me to tell you to be patient, any more than it was for others to counsel patience to African Americans petitioning for equal rights half a century ago. But I will say this: We have made progress, and we will make more. And I think it's important to remember that there is not a single issue that my administration deals with on a daily basis that does not touch on the lives of the LGBT community. We all have a stake in reviving this economy. We all have a stake in putting people back to work. We all have a stake in improving our schools and achieving quality, affordable health care. We all have a stake in meeting the difficult challenges we face in Iraq and Afghanistan.

For while some may wish to define you solely by your sexual orientation or gender identity alone, you know and I know that none of us wants to be defined by just one part of what makes us whole. You're also parents worried about your children's futures. You're spouses who fear that you or the person you love will lose a job. You're workers worried about the rising cost of health insurance. You're soldiers, you are neighbors, you are friends. And most importantly, you are Americans who care deeply about this country and its future.

So I know you want me working on jobs and the economy and all the other issues that we're dealing with. But my commitment to you is unwavering, even as we wrestle with these enormous problems. And while progress may be taking longer than you'd like as a result of all that we face, and that's the truth, do not doubt the direction we are heading and the destination we will reach.

My expectation is that when you look back on these years, you will see a time in which we put a stop to discrimination against gays and lesbians, whether in the office or on the battlefield. You will see a time in which we as a nation finally recognize relationships between two men or two women as just as real and admirable as relationships between a man and a woman. You will see a nation that's valuing and cherishing these families, as we build a more perfect union, a union in which gay Americans are an important part. I am committed to these goals, and my administration will continue fighting to achieve them.

And there's no more poignant or painful reminder of how important it is that we do so than the loss experienced by Dennis and Judy Shepard, whose son Matthew was stolen in a terrible act of violence 11 years ago. In May, I met with Judy—who's here tonight with her husband—I met her in the Oval Office, and I promised her that we were going to pass an inclusive hate crimes bill, a bill named for her son.

This struggle has been long. Time and again we faced opposition. Time and again, the measure was defeated or delayed. But the Shepards never gave up. They turned tragedy into an unshakeable commitment. Countless activists and organizers never gave up. You held vigils; you spoke out, year after year, Congress after Congress. The House passed the bill again this week. And I can announce that after more than a decade, this bill is set to pass, and I will sign it into law.

It's a testament to the decade-long struggle of Judy and Dennis, who tonight will receive a tribute named for somebody who inspired so many of us—named for Senator Ted Kennedy, who fought tirelessly for this legislation. And it's a testament to the Human Rights Campaign and those who organized and advocated. And it's a testament to Matthew and to others who've been the victims of attacks not just meant to break bones, but to break spirits; not meant just to inflict harm, but to instill fear. Together, we will have moved closer to that day when no one has to be afraid to be gay in America, when no one has to fear walking down the street holding the hand of the person they love.

But we know there's far more work to do. We're pushing hard to pass an inclusive employee nondiscrimination bill. For the first time ever, an administration official testified in Congress in favor of this law. Nobody in America should be fired because they're gay, despite doing a great job and meeting their responsibilities. It's not fair, it's not right, we're going to put a stop to it. And it's for this reason that if any of my nominees are attacked, not for what they believe, but for who they are, I will not waver in my support, because I will not waver in my

commitment to ending discrimination in all its forms.

We are reinvigorating our response to HIV/AIDS here at home and around the world. We're working closely with the Congress to renew the Ryan White Program, and I look forward to signing it into law in the very near future. We are rescinding the discriminatory ban on entry to the United States based on HIV status. The regulatory process to enact this important change is already underway. And we also know that HIV/AIDS continues to be a public health threat in many communities, including right here in the District of Columbia. Jeffrey Crowley, the Director of the Office of National AIDS Policy, recently held a forum in Washington, DC, and is holding forums across the country to seek input as we craft a national strategy to address this crisis.

We are moving ahead on "don't ask, don't tell." We should not be punishing patriotic Americans who have stepped forward to serve this country. We should be celebrating their willingness to show such courage and selflessness on behalf of their fellow citizens, especially when we're fighting two wars.

We cannot afford to cut from our ranks people with the critical skills we need to fight any more than we can afford, for our military's integrity, to force those willing to do so into careers encumbered and compromised by having to live a lie. So I'm working with the Pentagon, its leadership, and the Members of the House and Senate on ending this policy. Legislation has been introduced in the House to make this happen. I will end "don't ask, don't tell." That's my commitment to you.

It is no secret that issues of great concern to gays and lesbians are ones that raise a great deal of emotion in this country. And it's no secret that progress has been incredibly difficult. We can see that with the time and dedication it took to pass hate crimes legislation. But these issues also go to the heart of who we are as a people. Are we a nation that can transcend old attitudes and worn divides? Can we embrace our differences and look to the hopes and dreams that we share? Will we uphold the ideals on which this Nation was founded, that all of us are equal, that all of us deserve the same opportunity to live our lives freely and pursue our chance at happiness? I believe we can; I believe we will.

And that is why—[*applause*]—that's why I support ensuring that committed gay couples have the same rights and responsibilities afforded to any married couple in this country. I believe strongly in stopping laws designed to take rights away and passing laws that extend equal rights to gay couples. I've required all agencies in the Federal Government to extend as many Federal benefits as possible to LGBT families as the current law allows. And I've called on Congress to repeal the so-called Defense of Marriage Act and to pass the Domestic Partners Benefits and Obligations Act. And we must all stand together against divisive and deceptive efforts to feed people's lingering fears for political and ideological gain.

For the struggle waged by the Human Rights Campaign is about more than any policy we can enshrine into law. It's about our capacity to love and commit to one another. It's about whether or not we value as a society that love and commitment. It's about our common humanity and our willingness to walk in someone else's shoes, to imagine losing a job not because of your performance at work but because of your relationship at home, to imagine worrying about a spouse in the hospital with the added fear that you'll have to produce a legal document just to comfort the person you love, to imagine the pain of losing a partner of decades and then discovering that the law treats you like a stranger.

If we are honest with ourselves we'll admit that there are too many who do not yet know in their lives or feel in their hearts the urgency of this struggle. That's why I continue to speak about the importance of equality for LGBT families, and not just in front of gay audiences. That's why Michelle and I have invited LGBT families to the White House to participate in events like the Easter Egg Roll, because we want to send a message. And that's why it's so important that you continue to speak out, that you continue to set an example, that you continue to pressure leaders, including me, and to make the case all across America.

So tonight I'm hopeful because of the activism I see in this room, because of the compassion I've seen all across America, and because of the progress we have made throughout our history, including the history of the movement for LGBT equality.

Soon after the protests at Stonewall 40 years ago, the phone rang in the home of a soft-spoken elementary school teacher named Jeanne Manford. It was one in the morning, and it was the police. Now, her son Morty had been at the Stonewall the night of the raids. Ever since, he had felt within him a new sense of purpose. So, when the officer told Jeanne that her son had been arrested, which was happening often to gay protesters, she was not entirely caught off guard. And then the officer added one more thing: "And you know, he's homosexual." [*Laughter*] Well, that police officer sure was surprised when Jeanne responded: "Yes, I know. Why are you bothering him?"

And not long after, Jeanne would be marching side by side with her son through the streets of New York. She carried a sign that stated her support. People cheered. Young men and women ran up to her, kissed her, and asked her to talk to their parents. And this gave Jeanne and Morty an idea.

And so, after that march on the anniversary of the Stonewall protests, amidst the violence and the vitriol of a difficult time for our Nation, Jeanne and her husband Jules, two parents who loved their son deeply, formed a group to support other parents and, in turn, to support their children, as well. At the first meeting Jeanne held in 1973, about 20 people showed up. But slowly, interest grew. Morty's life tragically was cut short by AIDS, but the cause endured. Today, the organization they founded for parents, families, and friends of lesbians and gays has more than 200,000 members and supporters. It's made a difference for countless families across America. And Jeanne would later say, "I considered myself such a traditional person. I didn't even cross the street against the light. [*Laughter*] But I wasn't going to let anybody walk over Morty."

That's the story of America: of ordinary citizens organizing, agitating, and advocating for change; of hope stronger than hate; of love more powerful than any insult or injury; of Americans fighting to build for themselves and their families a nation in which no one is a second-class citizen, in which no one is denied their basic rights, in which all of us are free to live and love as we see fit.

And tonight, somewhere in America, a young person, let's say a young man, will struggle to fall to sleep, wrestling alone with a secret he's held as long as he can remember. Soon, perhaps, he will decide it's time to let that secret out. What happens next depends on him, his family, as well as his friends and his teachers and his community. But it also depends on us, on the kind of society we engender, the kind of future we build.

I believe the future is bright for that young person. For while there will be setbacks and bumps along the road, the truth is that our common ideals are a force far stronger than any division that some might sow. These ideals, when voiced by generations of citizens, are what made it possible for me to stand here today. These ideals are what made it possible for the people in this room to live freely and openly, when for most of history that would have been inconceivable. That's the promise of America, HRC. That's the promise we're called to fulfill. Day by day, law by law, changing mind by mind, that is the promise we are fulfilling.

Thank you for the work you're doing. God bless you. God bless America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:10 p.m. at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Joe Solmonese, president, and Terry Bean, member of the board of directors, Human Rights Campaign; Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy; Tipper Gore, wife of former Vice President Al Gore; entertainer Stefani J.A. "Lady Gaga" Germanotta; Dennis and Judy Shepard, parents of Matthew Shepard, who was attacked and killed in October 1998; and Jeanne Manford, cofounder, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 11.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero of Spain and an Exchange With Reporters
October 13, 2009

President Obama. Well, let me first of all say welcome to Prime Minister Zapatero and his delegation. The United States and Spain are NATO allies, and our countries have a relationship that dates back centuries. So on behalf of the American people, I want to welcome you and deliver a strong message of friendship.

Spain and the United States are working together on some of the most difficult security issues that we face in the world. And during the course of our lunch, we discussed the situation in Afghanistan, and I thanked Prime Minister Zapatero for the partnership with Spanish forces in helping to bring security and stability to Afghanistan and to help train Afghans so that they can provide for their own security.

We discussed the Middle East, where the Prime Minister will be traveling after his visit to Washington. And we both agreed that the time is right for a resumption of negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis in order to create a—two states that are living side by side in peace and security.

We discussed the issue of Iran specifically and nuclear proliferation more generally. And we pledged cooperation in trying to encourage Iran to take a path that allows for peaceful nuclear energy, but also rejects a path of nuclear weapons that could lead to a arms race in the region.

And I congratulated Prime Minister Zapatero on his assumption in 2010 of the EU Presidency and pledged that the United States is going to be working closely with the EU on a whole range of issues, from counterterrorism to Kosovo to dealing with improving relations with Russia, even as we continue to move forward on further integration in Europe.

Finally, we discussed the economy and noted that obviously the United States and Spain are both working diligently to put our people back to work and recover from what has been the worst recession in decades.

We noted that Spain is the third largest investor in the United States this past quarter, and the United States is the largest investor in Spain. And so we have enormous commercial ties between our two countries, and we pledged to work diligently to strengthen them, particularly around key issues like renewable energy and transportation, where Spain has been a worldwide leader and the United States, I think, has enormous potential to move forward.

So in conclusion, I want to thank you for taking the time to be here. And I am absolutely confident that your Government and ours will continue to strengthen our relationship in the years to come, and that with Spain's leadership in Europe and around the world that we can make enormous progress together that serves both the Spanish people well as well as the American people. So thank you so much.

Prime Minister Zapatero. Thank you. Thank you very much. Well, this is the first day of our work together, and I would very much like to thank President Obama for his hospitality, and I join him in his words, when President Obama said that Spain and the United States have a great possibility for developing our relations and our common work in the economy and in all these different fields, in security, so much we can do together.

In addition, the Spanish people are most satisfied about this very positive relationship and the good atmosphere between our two countries. We've always looked with great attention and appreciation the political developments and evolution in North America, ever since the Founding Fathers up to the present time. There we have always seen great lessons for history and democracy.

There are two major fields, two great fields that have occupied most of our time in our workday today; that's the economy and security. We are, as regards the economy, coming out of a very difficult economic crisis, and we have to do so in a way that is more rational and more sustainable. And a more sustainable

growth in which we attach much more importance to innovation and not greed, in which the new technologies, the new energies, the biotechnology occupy an essential and pivotal role.

In addition, Spain and the United States have a very intense economic relationship. Great American companies have invested and created employment in Spain. And we have shared the technology, and therefore, we hope that in the future, we'll continue to bear witness to the investment of American companies also in Spain.

And today, Spanish companies are also investing in the United States. They're leaders in renewable energy and high speed and also in the biotech industry. And my wish is that in this coming out of the crisis that we're working on, that there may be more American companies investing in Spain, creating employment and that also the reverse—that we may continue in Spain, also in the United States, so that we can do this together anyway.

We are going to be working to—in order for there to be a forum on bilateral investments so that it may be celebrated; also on economic cooperation, something that—to be done by our two Governments, together with the great companies that are working bilaterally in our two countries, American and Spanish, in America and Spain, respectively.

And now allow me to talk about world security. I fully respect President Obama's peace efforts for the international world order. And I especially support him in his call for the reduction of nuclear weapons. And we will be cooperating in—for the conference in April on the reduction of nuclear weapons from our position as Presidency of the European Union at the beginning of next year.

We've spoken in depth about the Middle East, and we agree that there is a moment of opportunity for us right now. And the key to the peace in the Middle East—sorry, the peace in the Middle East is the key to settling problems with security, with peace in other parts of the world. And we've agreed to strengthen the actions of the United States and the European Union in the Middle East.

Our engagement in Afghanistan is firm, is solid. And we're guaranteeing the stability, the security. Reducing radicalism and Talibans as essential in order to make it possible for their people to have a future. And we will continue working together in our cooperation in Afghanistan with our training in security matters and also with economic support.

Iran has to respect the rules of the international community. And we certainly wish and hope and trust that this small window in the reduction of nuclear weapons may consolidate and strengthen. But there will always be a demanding and firm stance on behalf of both the European Union and the United States.

And finally, we've also talked about Latin America, about cooperation there, about this continent that is too so close to us both and so essential in terms of its stability and its prosperity. And also, we've committed to a new transatlantic agenda of the United States and the European Union to work together in counterterrorism and also to improve security worldwide, in addition, also, to increase our scientific cooperation.

Thank you very much, President Obama. As you see, we've had a very intensive working session, but I certainly think that it has been most productive both for the United States and Spain and for the two countries jointly.

President Obama. Excellent. All right, we're going to take two questions. First one from Stephen Collinson [Agence France-Presse]. Yes.

Afghanistan

Q. Mr. President, you said a while back that your job is to be the chief skeptic towards the idea of sending more troops to Afghanistan. Have you heard anything that would—that's eased your skepticism so far? And when do you think you might be in a position to make a final decision on the way forward?

President Obama. We are going through a very deliberate process that is completely consistent with what I said back in March. At the time, I said we were going to deploy additional troops in order to secure the election. After the election, I said it was important for us to reassess the situation on the ground, and that's what we're doing not just on the military side but also on the civilian side.

And I won't provide you a preview of what I've been seeing or hearing. I will tell you that

our principal goal remains to root out Al Qaida and its extremist allies that can launch attacks against the United States or its allies. That's our principal mission. We are also, obviously, interested in stability in the region, and that includes not only Afghanistan but also Pakistan.

And finally, we hope that the people in those areas are able to achieve peace and prosperity. The military security that's provided in our ability to train Afghan forces is one element of it. Another element of it is making sure that we are doing a good job in helping build capacity on the civilian side, in areas like agriculture and education. And I would expect that we will have a completion of this current process in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, we still have troops there who are doing extraordinary work each and every day, helping to keep the Afghan people secure, training Afghan troops, working with our ISAF partners. And so we are extraordinarily grateful to them.

The work continues in Afghanistan. We just want to make sure that at all times not only the young men and women who are already there but also any additional young men and women, both military and civilian, who might be working there are served by a policy that's sustainable and effective. And I'm confident that we're going to be able to achieve that.

I apologize. I forgot that there were some, perhaps, not English speakers here. [*Laughter*] That's a long thing to translate. You want to give it a stab?

Interpreter. That will be fine.

President Obama. Okay, go ahead.

[*At this point, the President's remarks were translated into Spanish*.]

President Obama. *Muy bien*. [*Laughter*]

Guantanamo Bay Detainees

Q. I have a question for the Spanish President of the Government. I would like to know about the closing down of Guantanamo—this is for the Spanish President of the Government—about how many of the detainees Spain would be taking, what nationality they would have?

Prime Minister Zapatero. President Obama, yes, we were talking about with in fact the closing down of Guantanamo and the detainees. It's something that we are assessing right now. President Obama welcomed the initiative of Spain, the offering of Spain. We are still assessing the exact numbers, but our resolve to support President Obama and back him in this is absolutely, absolutely clear for closing down, to make it possible.

As regards Afghanistan, we've thanked President Obama for his words of appreciation because we—because of our commitment in Afghanistan have also suffered the loss of lives over the 9 years we've been present there, casualties in our service men and women.

And President Obama has also acknowledged the important role that we are playing as trainers, as civil guard, Guardia Civil, in security training, where they have a brilliant record.

We also conveyed that we are ready to continue to that and make the most possible of that capability of ours, to take it to its maximum effect in training, to continue training security forces in Afghanistan and also elsewhere in other countries, as Guardia Civil has such a longstanding experience in this.

President Obama. Excellent. Thank you, everybody.

Health Care Reform Legislation

Q. Any response to Senator Snowe voting for the Senate Finance bill?

President Obama. Well, I know the vote has not taken place yet.

Q. I have heard that she will vote for it.

President Obama. But I just want to thank the Senate Finance Committee for plowing forward on what we all acknowledge is a extraordinarily complicated issue. I think they've done excellent work. And I think not only Chairman Baucus and others, but in particular Senator Snowe, has been extraordinarily diligent in working together so that we can reduce costs of health care, make sure that people who don't have it are covered, make sure that people who do have insurance have more

security and stability, and that over the long run we're saving families, businesses, and our Government money.

So I never count chickens before they're hatched, but this is, obviously, another step forward in bringing about a better deal for the American people.

All right. Thanks, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:21 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Prime Minister Zapatero and a reporter spoke in Spanish, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks on Senate Action on Health Care Reform Legislation
October 13, 2009

Good afternoon. Today we reached a critical milestone in our effort to reform our health care system. After many months of thoughtful deliberation, the fifth and final committee responsible for health care reform has passed a proposal that has both Democratic and Republican support. This effort was made possible by the tireless efforts of Chairman Max Baucus and the other members of the Senate Finance Committee. It's a product of vigorous debate and difficult negotiations.

After the consideration of hundreds of amendments, it includes ideas from both Democrats and Republicans, which is why it enjoys the support of people from both parties. And I want to particularly thank Senator Olympia Snowe for both the political courage and the seriousness of purpose that she's demonstrated throughout this process.

Now, this bill is not perfect, and we have a lot of difficult work ahead of us. There are still significant details and disagreements to be worked out over the next several weeks as the five separate bills from the Senate and the House are merged into one proposal. But I do believe the work of the Senate Finance Committee has brought us significantly closer to achieving the core objectives I laid out early in September.

Most importantly, this bill goes a long way towards offering security to those who have insurance and affordable options for those who don't. It reins in some of the worst practices of the insurance industry, like the denial of coverage due to preexisting conditions. It also sets up an insurance exchange that will make coverage affordable for those who don't currently have it. And as the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has certified, it will slow the growth of health care costs in the long term, and it will not add a penny to our deficit.

The committee's progress over the past several weeks is the culmination of work by all five committees and numerous Members of Congress over the better part of this year. We've reached out to stakeholders across the spectrum: doctors and nurses; businesses and workers; hospitals and even drug companies. And we've considered a wide variety of ideas and proposals in an effort to find common ground.

As a result of these efforts, we are now closer than ever before to passing health reform. But we're not there yet. Now is not the time to pat ourselves on the back. Now is not the time to offer ourselves congratulations. Now is the time to dig in and work even harder to get this done. And in this final phase, I hope that we will continue to engage each other with the spirit of civility and seriousness that has brought us this far and that this subject deserves.

I commend the Chairman and the committee's members for their achievement and the example that they've set, and I look forward to continue to work with Congress in the weeks ahead. We are going to get this done.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:11 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Remarks at PBS's "Fiesta Latina: In Performance at the White House"
October 13, 2009

Good evening. *Buenas noches*. Welcome to the White House. Tonight we are proud to host the third in a series of evenings celebrating the music that has helped define this Nation and helped define us as a people.

We began this tradition with jazz and country music. And tonight, as we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, we are honored to be joined by some of this country's most successful and innovative performers of Latin music.

I want to thank Marc Anthony, Gloria Estefan, Jose Feliciano, Pete Escovedo, Thalia, Tito El Bambino, Aventura, Los Lobos, and Sheila E. for performing tonight.

I also want to thank Jimmy Smits, Eva Longoria Parker, and George Lopez for joining us, and Maricel Presilla for serving as our guest chef and cooking us all this delicious food. Please give Maricel a big round of applause.

We have some other honored guests tonight: Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis; Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. I want to thank all the Members of Congress here tonight, including—especially the chairwoman of the Hispanic Caucus, Nydia Velazquez. Thank you for coming.

And finally I want to acknowledge somebody that we're all so proud of, our newest Justice of the Supreme Court, Sonia Sotomayor.

Like our own Latino community, Latin music is not easy to define. Styles like Cuban salsa, Mexican norteno, Puerto Rican reggaeton and Dominican bachata are as vibrant and unique as the places they come from. But although Latin music takes many forms, this spirit of diversity also unifies us. At this—at its heart are the West African rhythms brought by slaves in the Caribbean, the guitars first carried to the New World by Spanish conquistadors. It incorporates the accordions played by German immigrants, the flutes and drums used by indigenous peoples, and the beats born in cities like New York and Miami.

And even though it's constantly evolving and changing, Latin music speaks to us in a language we can all understand: about hope and joy, sorrow and pain, friendship and love. It moves us, and it tends to make us move a little bit ourselves. [*Laughter*]

In the end, what makes Latin music great is the same thing that's always made America great: the unique ability to celebrate our differences while creating something new; to realize that although we may come from different backgrounds and different cultures, what unites us will always be stronger than what divides us. In the words of Gloria Estefan who's here tonight, "The most beautiful things in this country have the flavor of other places."

And so to all of you who are watching this evening, either here or at home, please enjoy some truly global music from some of the most talented artists in the world. I can tell you that the White House West Wing and East Wing—and whatever other wings we have—have been looking forward to this evening for quite some time. Enjoy. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:30 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers Jimmy Smits, Eva Longoria Parker, and George Lopez. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks in Fairfax County, Virginia
October 14, 2009

Hello, everybody. Now before I begin, I just want to thank my outstanding Secretary of Transportation, Ray LaHood, who's with us today. And I want to thank the folks at Cherry Hill Construction for having me here today. We just took a look at this construction site,

and I had a chance to talk to all the outstanding men and women who are working here. Talking with them was a reminder of just how hard they work every single day, just how hard they fight on behalf of their families, and just how hard these times have been for working men and women like them.

Hard-working Americans have borne the brunt of this recession. They've been laid off in historic numbers; they've seen their hours trimmed and their wages cut; they've lived in fear of being the next ones to be let go. And that's not right. Middle class Americans are the ones who built this country. They made it great, and they keep it going each and every day. And they deserve leaders in Washington who are willing to work as hard as they work, who are willing to fight for their futures as hard as they fight for their families.

And we need to all live up to our responsibilities as faithfully as these workers here are living up to theirs. And that's why our goal is not just to rebound from this recession, but to start building an economy that works for all Americans; where everyone who's looking for work can find a job—and not just a temporary job, but a permanent job that lasts from season to season; where our stock market isn't only rising again but our businesses are hiring again. That's our goal.

And I know we have a lot of work to do to meet that goal. But I also know that thanks to the Governor here in Virginia, Tim Kaine, thanks to two outstanding Senators, Mark Warner and Jim Webb, and a great Congressman and—Congressman Jim Moran and as well as Congressman Gerry Connolly, and thanks to the work of Ray here and the rest of my administration, we've made some meaningful progress over the last several months.

Because the fact is, as difficult as these times are—and they're profoundly difficult for a whole lot of people all across the country—we are moving in the right direction. Our economy is in better shape today than it was when I took office, when we were hemorrhaging 700,000 jobs a month and when our financial system was on the brink of collapse and economists from just about every part of the political spectrum were predicting that we might be sinking into a great depression.

And one of the reasons our economy is in better shape today is because we voted to move forward boldly and swiftly to pass a Recovery Act that's being carried out under the outstanding leadership of people like Ray, as well as my Vice President, Joe Biden. It's a Recovery Act that has spurred job creation and economic growth with projects like the one that I'm talking about here today.

Now back in February, Governor Kaine and I came here, and work was just getting underway. And this project, the Fairfax County Parkway project, is designed to be completed—to complete the original version of this parkway by connecting both ends of Fairfax County. The current phase of construction will create new private sector jobs, and that won't just make a difference to all the people who get these jobs, it will make a difference to all those communities where they spend their paychecks. Businesses of all size will be fueled by their paychecks: in Fairfax County, in Virginia, and beyond.

Now, this project is the largest of its kind in the State. But it's just 1 of more than 60 that are being planned all across Virginia. And it's 1 of 8,000 highway projects that have been approved under the Recovery Act across this country, nearly 5,000 of which are already under construction. To put this another way, roughly three-quarters of Recovery Act highway funding is already being invested as part of the largest investment in the Nation's infrastructure since President Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System back in the 1950s.

And because so many of these projects are being managed so well—and I want to thank the team that's been working so hard out here—these projects are coming in, on average, 10 to 20 percent under budget. That's unheard of—10 to 20 percent under budget. And that means we can do more. We can create more jobs and launch more projects with every taxpayer dollar.

It's important to note that the jobs we'll create are not Government jobs, but private sector jobs. Cherry Hill Construction was able to put people to work because of its—this project, just

as other private contractors are doing because of similar projects across the country. And ultimately, that's the engine of our economy: businesses, large and small, getting back on their feet. And that's the focus of our efforts.

But what makes these kinds of projects so important isn't just that we're creating so many jobs, it's that we're putting Americans to work doing the work that America needs done. We're rebuilding our crumbling roads, our bridges, our waterways. We've already approved nearly a thousand transportation projects to upgrade airports and railroads and mass transit systems and shipyards. We're strengthening our Nation's infrastructure in ways that will leave lasting benefits to our communities, making them stronger, making them safer, and making them better places to live.

Now, this is just one part of what we're doing through the Recovery Act to create jobs and spur economic growth. We've also provided the middle class—95 percent of working families—a tax cut, including 3 million families here in Virginia. We've increased and extended unemployment insurance for 12 million Americans to help them weather this economic storm, and that's benefited over 220,000 Virginians. We've made COBRA 65 percent cheaper, so if people are looking for work, they still have health coverage. We've offered emergency relief to more than 1 million seniors, veterans, and other Virginians who need it most.

We've provided assistance to States like Virginia to help prevent police officers and teachers and firefighters from being laid off. And we've supported over $250 million in lending in Virginia—and 30,000 loans to small businesses across America—that have helped to create or save thousands of jobs. And every American can track how their dollars are being spent by going to Recovery.gov, because I'm committed to upholding the highest standards of transparency and accountability for how we spend taxpayer money.

So here's the bottom line: We're moving forward on a number of economic fronts, and we're going to continue to explore each and every avenue that I can think of that will lead to job creation and economic growth. But it all starts with projects like this. Because if we can put Americans to work rebuilding the Fairfax County Parkway, we can help get the economy moving again in Fairfax County. And if we get the economy moving in Fairfax County, we get it moving across Virginia. And if we get it moving across Virginia, we're getting it moving all across America. That's what we committed ourselves to doing when I took office; we are moving forward.

I'm grateful to the outstanding work of the people who are standing behind me, as well as the—all the contractors and private businesses that are involved. And we are going to keep on going until we make sure that every single American in this country who's looking for work is going to be able to get the kind of well paying job that supports their families.

Thanks very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:34 p.m. at the Fairfax County Parkway extension.

Remarks on Signing an Executive Order Increasing Participation of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Federal Programs
October 14, 2009

Well, good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated. Welcome to the White House. I'm glad you could join us today as I proudly sign this Executive order reestablishing the President's Advisory Commission and White House Initiative on Asian American and Pacific Islanders.

Now, when we talk about America's AAPI communities, we're talking about the industry and entrepreneurship of people who've helped build this Nation for centuries: from the early days, as laborers on our railroads and farmers tilling our land, to today, as leaders in every sector of American life, from business to science to academia, law and more.

We're talking about the creative energies of musicians like the singers Penn Masala—we appreciate them—who performed today. And we're talking about the competitive spirit of athletes like Wat Misaka, who played for the New York Knicks back in 1947—the first non-White player in the NBA—and who served in the U.S. Army during World War II. Mr. Misaka is here as well today and—where's Mr. Misaka? There he is. Thank you so much.

We're talking about the public service of leaders like Secretaries Gary Locke and Steven Chu and Eric Shinseki and the folks on stage with me today. And we're talking about the courage and the patriotism and sacrifice of heroes like the members of the 442d Regimental Combat Team who served in World War II, including Terry Shima. Please give him a big round of applause. Mr. Shima is the executive director of the Japanese American Veterans Association, and we are grateful that he took the time to be here today.

Some of their families had been interned. Some had been interned themselves. But they still insisted on fighting for America and went on to become the most highly decorated unit of their size in history.

And one member of the regiment, Private Jake Kirihara, whose parents were held in a camp here in America while he fought overseas, later said: "Even though this wrong was done to us, there was never any question whether America was my country. If America needed me to help, I'll do it."

So this proud tradition of service continues today in Iraq and Afghanistan and around the world, carried on by folks like Tammy Duckworth, my dear friend who's here today. Tammy is a decorated member of our National Guard, a passionate advocate for our wounded warriors, who is now serving as our Assistant Secretary of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs at the Veterans Affairs Department. I'm proud to have her on board and pleased that she could join us today.

And on a personal note, when I talk about America's AAPI communities, I'm talking about my own family: my sister Maya, my brother-in-law Konrad, my beautiful nieces Suhaila and Savita, the folks I grew up with in Indonesia and in Honolulu, as part of the Hawaiian *ohana*, or family.

Our AAPI communities have roots that span the globe, but they embody a rich diversity, and a story of striving and success that are uniquely American. But focusing on all of these achievements doesn't tell the whole story and that's part of why we're here. It's tempting, given the strengths of the Asian American/Pacific Islander communities, for us to buy into the myth of the "model minority," and to overlook the very real challenges that certain Asian American/Pacific Islander communities are facing: from health disparities like higher rates of diabetes and Hepatitis B; to educational disparities that still exist in some communities—high dropout rates, low college enrollment rates; to economic disparities—higher rates of poverty in some communities, and barriers to employment and workplace advancement in others.

Some Asian American and Pacific Islanders, particularly new Americans and refugees, still face language barriers. Others have been victims of unthinkable hate crimes, particularly in the months after September 11th, crimes driven by ignorance and prejudice that are an affront to everything that this Nation stands for.

And then there are the disparities that we don't even know about because our data collection methods still aren't up to par. Too often, Asian American/Pacific Islanders are all lumped into one category, so we don't have accurate numbers reflecting the challenges of each individual community. Smaller communities in particular can get lost, their needs and concerns buried in a spreadsheet.

And that's why I'm signing this Executive order today, reestablishing the advisory commission and White House initiative created by President Clinton 10 years ago. Because when any of our citizens are unable to fulfill their potential due to factors that have nothing to do with their talent, character, or work ethic, then I believe there's a role for our Government to play, not to guarantee anybody's success or to solve everybody's problems, but to ensure that we're living up to our Nation's ideals; to ensure that we can each pursue our own version of happiness, and that we continue to be a Nation where all things are still possible for all people.

That's the impact that our Government can have.

It's the impact of a Small Business Administration that offers loans to Asian American/Pacific Islander entrepreneurs whose small businesses sustain so many communities around the country. It's the impact of a Department of Health and Human Services that funds research on the diseases that disproportionately affect Asian American and Pacific Islander families. It's the impact of a Justice Department that upholds the Voting Rights Act and its promise of language assistance and equal access to the polls. And it's the impact of evidence-based research and data collection and analysis on AAPI communities, so that no one is invisible to their Government.

All of that is the mission of this initiative and commission, to work with 23 agencies and departments across our Government to improve the health, education, and economic status of AAPI communities. The initiative and commission will be housed in the Department of Education, and they'll be cochaired by Secretaries Arne Duncan and Secretary Gary Locke, both of whom devoted their lives to promoting opportunity for all our citizens.

And I think it's fitting that we begin this work in the week leading up to the holiday of Diwali—the festival of lights—when members of some of the world's greatest faiths celebrate the triumph of good over evil.

This coming Saturday, Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and some Buddhists, here in America and around the world, will celebrate this holiday by lighting diyas, or lamps, which symbolize the victory of light over darkness, and knowledge over ignorance. And while this is a time of rejoicing, it's also a time for reflection, when we remember those who are less fortunate and renew our commitment to reach out to those in need.

While the significance of the holiday for each faith varies, all of them mark it by gathering with family members to pray and decorate the house and enjoy delicious food and sweet treats. And in that spirit of celebration and contemplation, I am happy to light the White House *diya*, and wish you all a happy Diwali and a *Saal Mubarak*.

[*At this point, the White House diya was lit while a Hindu chant was performed.*]

Now I'm going to sign this bill—sign this order.

[*The Executive order was signed.*]

All right. There we go.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:46 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Commerce Gary F. Locke; Secretary of Energy Steven Chu; Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki; and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. The Hindu chant was performed by Sri Narayanachar Digalakote of the Sri Siva Vishnu Temple in Lanham, MD. The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Celebrating the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate
October 14, 2009

Thank you, Patrick, for that generous introduction and for ensuring that the Kennedy family spirit of public service lives on as strong as ever.

Some of the Cabinet Secretaries who are doing good work day in and day out on behalf of the American people have joined us tonight, so I want to make mention of them: our outstanding Attorney General, Eric Holder; our Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis, who's doing wonderful work; Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius; and Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano.

It's also a testament to Ted Kennedy that so many of his congressional colleagues and friends have come together for this cause. And

I want to thank Ted's longtime friend and adviser, and our newest member of the United States Senate, Paul Kirk, for his deep commitment to public service. Paul, I hope you remember to add your name to the drawer of the desk to which two Kennedys from Massachusetts carved theirs before you.

And to Vicki and all the members of the Kennedy family—to Ted and Kara and obviously, Patrick—there are few who are not inspired by the grace and love that all of you have shown throughout a difficult time.

Our friend Ted left us less than 2 months ago. In the days that followed, we gathered in Boston to celebrate his life with a joyous Irish wake, of sorts, at the John F. Kennedy Library and with heavy hearts on Mission Hill. We watched as mourners lined the streets of Massachusetts and Washington in the rain to say a final thank you and as decades' worth of his colleagues and staff lined the steps of the Capitol to say a final goodbye. And we smiled as the Caucus Room in the Russell Building, a room where so much American history was made, was renamed for the three Kennedy brothers who served there.

And over those days, there was some small measure of comfort in the fact that millions of Americans were reminded of Ted Kennedy's legacy and a new generation came to know of it: his legacy as a man who loved his family and loved his country; his legacy as a Senator who crafted hundreds of pieces of legislation and helped pass thousands more, all with an incalculable impact on the lives of ordinary Americans; his legacy as a mentor who not only taught so many young Senators, including myself, but inspired so many young people and young staffers, some who entered public service because of Teddy, others who, because of him, just plain refused to leave. [*Laughter*]

Tonight, thanks to the efforts of each and every one of you, we're here to consider another legacy—one not yet written—of a man who loved the history and vibrancy of a uniquely American institution and was absolutely determined to keep it alive in our time. There is no greater tribute we could offer him than to make the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate a reality.

When Teddy first arrived in the United States Senate, he immersed himself in the issues of the day and the concerns of folks back home. But he also threw himself into the history of the Chamber. He studied its philosophical underpinnings; he studied its giants and their careers, the times that influenced its Members, and how its Members influenced the times. He became fluent in procedure and protocol, no matter how obscure, until he could master the Senate as easily as he mastered the oceans.

No one made the Senate come alive like he did. He loved its history and its place in our American story. Rarely was he more animated than when he'd lead you through the living museums that were his office and his hideaway office in the Capitol. They held memories that stood still, even as he refused to. And he could—and he would—tell you everything there was to know about each artifact, each object that you were seeing.

Any of us who've had the privilege to serve in that institution know that it's impossible not to share Teddy's feeling for the history that swirls around us. It's a place where you instinctively pull yourself a little straighter and commit yourself to acting a little nobler.

I still remember the first time I pulled open the drawer of my desk and saw the names like Taft and Baker, Simon and Wellstone and Robert F. Kennedy. I thought of the great battles they'd waged and how they still echoed through the Senate Chambers. And one can't enter the Chamber without thinking of the momentous debates that have occurred within its walls, questions of war and peace, of the tangled bargain between North and South, Federal and State, of the origins of slavery and prejudice, of the unfinished battles for civil rights and equality and opportunity.

It was where Americans of great eloquence deliberated and discussed the great issues of the age, where Webster and Clay and Calhoun fought and forged compromise, where LBJ stalked the aisles, imposing his will and collecting votes, and where Ted Kennedy raged at injustice like a force of nature, even after a staffer would hand him a note saying, "Sir, you're shouting." [*Laughter*]

At its worst, it could be a place where progress was stymied. There was a time, of course, when there were no desks for women or African Americans or Latino Americans or Asian Americans. There was a time when a Senator might have referred to another as a—I like this—"noisome, squat, and nameless animal"—[*laughter*]—just to name one instance of the occasional lack of decorum. And we should all view it as a positive sign that there hasn't been a caning on the Senate floor in more than 150 years. [*Laughter*] That's good.

But at its best, it was what Ted Kennedy loved, a place of community and camaraderie, where Senators inspired their colleagues to seek out those better angels and work collectively to perfect our Union, bit by bit. And in my time in the Senate, I never met a colleague, not even one with whom I most deeply disagreed, who didn't have a deep sincerity in his or her beliefs, an abiding love for this country, and a genuine desire to leave it stronger and better.

Still, I know that many of us, from both parties, shared Ted's sentiment that something vital about the Senate has been lost. Where it once was a more personal and more collegial place, it's become more polarized and more confrontational. And gone, sometimes, is that deeper understanding of one another, that ideas—that there are great battles to be won and great battles to be waged, but not against the person on the other side of the aisle, rather to be waged on behalf of the country.

What Ted wanted to save, above anything else, is that sense of community and collegiality and mutual responsibility to our constituents, to the institution, and to one another. "As Senators," he wrote, "we need to be vigilant that we don't lose track of the whole essence of what the Senate is; of what our involvement in it signifies; of our relationship with people; and of what all of that should lead to, which is the unfettered and vital exchange of ideas."

That's why whenever heartbreak struck a colleague, he was always the first to call. That's why whenever a stalemate needed to be broken, he was the first to visit another Senator's office. That's why whenever debate got fierce, he never got personal, because that was the fastest way to ensure nothing got done. Once after he and Strom Thurmond went at each other for a few rounds—as you'd imagine Ted and Strom might do—Ted put his arm around him and said, "C'mon, Strom. Let's go upstairs, and I'll give you a few judges." [*Laughter*]

The thing is, even though he never technically ran the Senate, it often felt like Teddy did. It was his arena. That's why if you came to the Senate hoping to be a great Senator someday, he was who you went to see first. I know that's who I went to see first. Because rather than lord over it, Teddy sought to mentor others to better navigate it. Rather than to go it alone, he sought cooperation. He never hesitated to cede credit. And rather than abandon course when political winds got rough, he always followed his north star: the cause of a society that is more fair, more decent, and more just. And through all of it, his seriousness of purpose was rivaled only by his humility, his warmth, his good cheer, his sense of humor.

That is who Ted Kennedy was. That's what he did, and that's why he's so missed. And that's why the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate is such a vital and important idea.

It'll be a living institute where students and teachers and the public can come together and learn about the role and importance of the Senate he loved so much. It'll be a place where the most significant moments of progress and peril from our history come alive in recreations and seminars and lectures. It'll be a place for new Senators and their staff to get a little training, which we can all use, right, Paul? [*Laughter*] And all of it will embody Ted Kennedy's undeniable passion for improving our civic responsibility, increasing our public participation, enhancing our national life.

And most importantly, this institute will stoke a new passion for the Senate and inspire, we hope, a new generation to pursue the Kennedy legacy of service. For it is now, especially now, that we need to get people interested in our public problems and reignite their faith in our public institutions, bring Americans together to forge consensus and understand not

just the United States Senate's role in our Government, but their role in it as well.

Today, the Senate is engaged in another important battle on one of the great causes of our time, the cause of Ted Kennedy's life, the battle to make health care not a privilege for some, but a right for all. He has been so sorely missed in this debate, especially now that we're closer than we've ever been to passing real health reform. But even though we took a critical step forward this week, we've got more work to do. And I hope and believe that we will continue to engage each other with the spirit of civility and seriousness that has brought us this far, a spirit that I think Teddy would have liked to see.

More than a half a century ago, a Senate committee was set up to choose the five greatest Senators of all time. No, it wasn't an exercise in the Senate's own vanity; it was because there were five empty spaces designated for portraits in the Senate Reception Room.

"There are no standard tests to apply to a Senator," the chairman of that committee wrote. "No Dun & Bradstreet rating, no scouting reports. His talents may vary with his time; his contribution may be limited by his politics. To judge his own true greatness, particularly in comparison with his fellow senators long after they are dead, is nearly an impossible task."

When John F. Kennedy wrote those words, I doubt that he imagined his 25-year-old brother would one day stand as indisputably one of the finest Senators of this or any age. But here's the thing: Teddy didn't earn that distinction just because he served in the United States Senate for nearly 1 out of every 5 days of its existence. He earned it because each of those days was full and passionate and productive and advanced the life of this Nation in a way that few Americans ever have. And he did it all by bridging the partisan divide again and again in an era when—that someday may be recalled as one where bipartisanship was too rare an achievement.

There will never be another like Ted Kennedy. But there will be other great Senators who follow in his footsteps. That's not an insult to his legacy; it is, rather, the legacy he sought to leave, both with this institute and with his example.

"Being a Senator changes a person," he wrote in his memoirs. "Something fundamental and profound happens to you when you arrive there, and it stays with you all the time that you are privileged to serve. I have seen the changes in people who have come into the Senate. It may take a year, or 2 years, or 3 years, but it always happens; it fills you with a heightened sense of purpose."

In all our debates, through all our tests, over all the years that are left to come, may we all be blessed with a sense of purpose like Edward M. Kennedy's. Thank you, Vicki. Thanks to all of you. Thanks for making this such a success. God bless you; God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:21 p.m. at the Ritz Carlton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Patrick J. Kennedy and Edward M. Kennedy, Jr., sons, Kara Kennedy Allen, daughter, and Victoria R. Kennedy, wife, of former Sen. Kennedy. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 15.

Remarks at Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School in New Orleans, Louisiana
October 15, 2009

The President. What's going on, King? How's everybody doing? Well, what a warm greeting; I appreciate that, guys. Thank you so much.

It is great to see you. I just want you to know that I am so appreciative that your school has been such a good host during my visit. I had a chance to meet some of the students, your fellow students in there, and they told me all about what you guys are doing at the school.

And you know, I'm especially glad to come back here because I remember 4 years ago, right after the storm, a lot of people here felt forgotten. But because everybody worked hard, everybody kept hopeful, everybody was

determined to rebuild, you now see just a school that is doing much better than it was ever doing before the storm. So to all the parents and the community leaders who have helped rebuild, we are so grateful to you.

But my main message is for the students here. So I want everybody just for a second, listen up, real quiet. I think some of you know a little bit about me. You know, when I was growing up I didn't have my father at home; he had left us. We weren't rich. We didn't have a lot. But the one thing that my mother and my grandparents told me was that if I worked hard in school, if I loved to read and I loved math and I loved science and I studied hard, there wasn't anything that I couldn't do.

Now, just from meeting the young people here today I can tell that there're so many bright, smart, promising students here. But, you know, there are a lot of distractions out there. A lot of you think, "Well, you know, I don't want to study; I'm just going to play basketball." Or, "I don't want to study; I'm going to be a rap star."

I want all of you to know that the most important thing you can do for yourselves and for your community and for your country is to work hard in school and to treat each other with respect and treat yourself with respect, because I'm confident that if you all work very hard, then there's no reason why you can't be a doctor or a lawyer. There's no reason why you can't be the Secretary of Education or a principal of a school. There's no reason why you can't be a Congressman or a Senator. Maybe you can be the President of the United States. All right?

So I just got a promise in there—I want a promise from every single one of you that you guys are going to work hard in school each and every day. Give me that promise. You promise?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. You give me a pinkie promise?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Pinkie promise. All right, you know, that's a big promise there. So I'm counting on you guys. I'm going to come back and check on you guys to make sure you've all been working hard. All right? Okay.

And I also just want you to know that Michelle and Malia and Sasha and our dog Bo—everybody says hello, and everybody wishes you well. All right, thank you, guys. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:31 p.m.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in New Orleans
October 15, 2009

The President. Hello, New Orleans! Back in the Big Easy—it's good to see you all. Thank you. Thank you for the warm welcome. Please, everybody have a seat who can have a seat here. If you don't have a seat, then make yourself comfortable.

It is so good to see all of you. I've got a couple of—[*applause*]—thank you. I've got some special folks who are with us here today, so I just want to make sure that I announce them all. First of all, I want to thank Chancellor Tim Ryan and all of the staff here at the University of New Orleans for their outstanding work. I want to thank the Governor of the great State of Louisiana, Bobby Jindal, who is here.

[*At this point, some audience members began to applaud while others began to boo.*]

The President. No, no, I like—Bobby is doing a good job.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Hey, hey. Hold on a second. Bobby, if it makes—hold on. Bobby, first of all, if it makes you feel any better, I get that all the time. [*Laughter*] And the second point is that even though we have our differences politically, one thing I will say is this person is working hard on behalf of the State, and you've got to give people credit for working hard. He's a hard-working man.

We've got our senior Senator from the great State of Louisiana, Mary Landrieu. We've got our Lieutenant Governor—I don't know if he's related—his name is Mitch Landrieu. We've got an outstanding Member of Congress, Charlie Melancon. And we've got our newest member of the Louisiana delegation, Joe Cao, from this district, with his beautiful daughter.

Joe, what's your daughter's name?

Representative Joseph Cao. Betsy.

Betsy? She is adorable. Hey, Sophia, how are you doing? [*Laughter*] Yes, those are some cute kids. They look like mom. [*Laughter*] That's mom right there. There you go, well, she's gorgeous, like your daughters. I'm big on daughters.

We've got the mayor of New Orleans; Ray Nagin is in the house. This is a feisty crowd here. [*Laughter*] House Speaker Pro Tem Karen Carter Peterson is here. Senate President Joel Chaisson is here.

And we've got just some wonderful members of my Cabinet, who have been down here nonstop, trying to make sure the Federal Government is a good partner on the recovery process: Secretary Janet Napolitano of the Department of Human—Homeland Security; Secretary Shaun Donovan of HUD; Secretary Arne Duncan of Education. Arne is—was supposed to be sitting right here. I don't know where he is; he was right behind me. Chairwoman on the White House Council on Environmental Quality, which is very important in terms of restoring wetlands, Nancy Sutley is right here.

And finally, just I want to say thank you to Reverend Phoebe Roaf for the invocation, Maggie Calmes for leading the pledge, and Shamarr Keith Allen on the horn, playing the national anthem.

All right. Good to be back in the Crescent City.

Audience member. Love you!

The President. I love you back. [*Laughter*]

It's always an inspiration to spend time with men and women who have reminded the rest of America what it means to persevere in the face of tragedy, to rebuild in the face of ruin. And Katrina may have swept through the city, but it did not destroy this community, and that is because of you, the people of New Orleans.

It has now been just over 4 years since that terrible storm struck your shores. And in the days after it did, this Nation, and all the world, bore witness to the fact that the damage from Katrina was not caused just by a disaster of nature, but also by a breakdown of Government, that Government wasn't adequately prepared, and we didn't adequately respond.

Now, I saw the consequences of this failure during my visit here as a Senator and then as a candidate for President. So when I took office as President, one of the first things I did was tell my Cabinet and senior staff that our Gulf Coast rebuilding efforts and our disaster response efforts were going to be top priorities for this White House. I wanted to get it right, and I wanted us to be ready.

And so far, I'm pleased to report that we've made good progress. We've got a long way to go, but we've made progress. Over the last 9 months, we have sent more Cabinet members to this region than almost anywhere in the country, not just to make appearances, but to listen, and to learn, and help you move forward. As we've continued this recovery effort, I've made it clear that we're not going to tolerate the usual turf wars between agencies. So we've prioritized coordination between all levels of Government. We put in place innovative review and dispute resolution programs to get projects moving forward quickly. We've freed up over $1.5 billion in recovery and rebuilding assistance that had been tangled up in redtape for years.

And this assistance is allowing us to move forward together with projects that were stalled across the Gulf Coast: projects rebuilding and improving schools, investing in public health and safety, repairing broken roads and bridges and buildings. And this effort has been dramatically amplified by the Recovery Act, which has put thousands of Gulf Coast residents back to work.

On the housing front, we're tackling the corruption and inefficiency that plagued the New Orleans Housing Authority for years. We've also been able to dramatically cut the number of people who are still in emergency housing. We're moving forward—we're moving families towards self-sufficiency by helping homeowners

rebuild and helping renters find affordable options.

On the education front, I just visited Martin Luther King Charter School, the first school to reopen in the Ninth Ward and an inspiration for this city. We've also worked to be a better partner and free up funding that has allowed places like this university right here, the University of New Orleans and the Southern University of New Orleans to rebuild. We're looking for ways to be more flexible, so New Orleans can build the school system it deserves. And because a lot of your public schools opened themselves up to new ideas and innovative reforms, we're actually seeing an improvement in overall achievement that is making the city a model for reform nationwide. That is good news, thanks to the hard work being done right here in New Orleans.

When it comes to health care, we've invested in supporting health centers and recruiting more primary care providers and nurses and other medical professionals to fill the shortage left by Katrina. We remain committed to building a new VA medical center in downtown New Orleans so we can better serve and care for our veterans. And to help fight crime, we're helping to hire cops and rebuild jails.

So that's what we're doing in terms of rebuilding and recovery. But we're also focusing on preparedness and response so that history does not repeat itself. We are committed to making sure that a disaster like Katrina does not happen again. And that means in Washington, a focus on competence and accountability. And I'm proud that my FEMA Director, Craig Fugate, has 25 years of experience in disaster management in Florida, a State that's known its share of hurricanes. And I think Republicans and Democrats will testify to his skill and experience.

We have put together a group led by Shaun Donovan and Janet Napolitano to study disaster recovery across the country, to figure out how to do it better. Across the country, we're improving coordination among different agencies, we're modernizing our emergency communications, we're helping families plan for a crisis.

And here on the Gulf Coast, we're working to make sure this region is protected in the event of a 100-year storm. We've already seen 220 miles worth of levees and flood walls repaired, and we are working to strengthen the wetlands and barrier islands that are the first line of defense for the Gulf Coast. This isn't just critical to this region's physical protection, it's critical to our environment, it's critical to our economy. That's why we're establishing an interagency working group that will be responsible for coordinating our restoration efforts across the gulf at all levels of government.

Now, even with all the action we've taken and all the progress we've made, we know how much work is left to be done. Whether you're driving through New Orleans, Biloxi, or the southern part of Louisiana, it's clear how far we have to go before we can call this recovery a real success. There are sewers and roads still to repair. There are houses and hospitals still vacant. There are schools and neighborhoods still waiting to thrive once more. And so I promise you this: Whether it's me coming down here or my Cabinet or other members of my administration, we will not forget about New Orleans. We are going to keep on working. We are not going to forget about the Gulf Coast. Together, we will rebuild this region and we will rebuild it stronger than before. It is going to be stronger than before.

I know that for a lot of you, the questions and concerns you have aren't limited to the Recovery Act and the efforts that have taken place here on the Gulf. You're also wondering about the recovery effort that's taking place throughout America. Because an economic storm hit about 9 months ago, 10 months ago, that caused this recession that is as bad as anything we've seen since the Great Depression. Obviously, it hasn't left behind the death and destruction that Katrina and Rita left behind, but it's caused incredible pain and hardship for communities all across this country, communities that have seen too many jobs disappear, too many businesses close, too many middle class families who are just barely making it.

These families are the backbone of America; they're the ones who built this country and

made it great—you—and keep this country going each and every day. And so you deserve leaders in Washington who are willing to work as hard as you work, who are willing to fight for your futures.

That's why our goal is not just to rebound from this recession, it's to build an America that works for everybody, where everyone who's looking for work can find a job, not just a temporary job, but a permanent job that lasts from year to year, season to season. We want an economy where our stock market is not only rising again but our businesses are hiring again, and people's incomes are going up again. We're not going to rest until we get there.

Now, the Recovery Act we passed earlier this year has helped stop the bleeding; everybody agrees on that. It's put tax cuts in the pockets of working families and small businesses. It extended unemployment insurance and health insurance to people who've been laid off. It's saved or created hundreds of thousands of jobs in the private sector. And it made sure that teachers weren't being laid off and police officers weren't being laid off in states that were hemorrhaging because of lost tax revenue.

But the Recovery Act is just the start. If we want a recovery the lasts, if we want an economy that really grows again, we've got to rebuild stronger than before, just like you're doing here in New Orleans. We need to come together and meet the challenges that were with us before this recession hit: schools that weren't closing before the recession. That means building a clean energy economy that can lead to millions of new jobs and new industries. That means building an education system that equips every citizen with the skills and training they need to compete with any worker in the world. That means building a health care system that finally offers security to those who have insurance and affordable options to those who don't.

Let me say, we're going to get it done. We're going to get it done. Too many Americans have waited too long for this to happen. We are going to pass health care reform by the end of this year with the help of Mary Landrieu, with the help of Charlie Melancon, and maybe with the help of Joe Cao, we're going to get health care done this year.

Now, just in case any of you were wondering, I never thought any of this was going to be easy. [*Laughter*] You know, I listen to sometimes to these reporters on the news, "Well, why haven't you solved world hunger yet?" [*Laughter*] "Why isn't everybody—it's been 9 months. You know, why isn't there—" You know? I never said it was going to be easy.

What did I say during the campaign? I said is, change is hard. And big change is harder. And after the last 9 months, you know, I wasn't kidding. [*Laughter*] I wasn't kidding about it being hard. But you notice I wasn't kidding, I don't quit. We get this stuff done. We keep on going until we get it done. I don't quit. Let me tell you, those folks who are trying to stand in the way of progress? They're all—let me tell you, I'm just getting started. I don't quit. I'm not tired. I'm just getting started. [*Applause*] That's right. We're just getting started.

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. Thank you. All right. See? I'm getting all—you're getting me fired up.

I think it is important for those folks to understand I'm just ready to go. We're just going to keep on going. And the reason is, is because there are too many folks out there who are having a tough time—to get tired. The easiest thing in the world would be to just say, "Okay, well, I don't want any controversy; let me take the path of least resistance." But that means that the same folks who were struggling before we got elected are going to keep on struggling. People, if they had high premiums on their health care before, they're going to have even higher premiums after. That's not why I applied for the job.

The challenges we face, both here on the Gulf Coast and throughout America, they're big, they're complex challenges. They don't lend themselves to easy answers or quick fixes. Meeting them requires diligence, and perseverance, and patience.

It also requires more than just government programs and policies. It requires a renewed spirit of cooperation and commitment among our citizens, a renewed sense of responsibility to ourselves and to one another, which is why it's important, whether you're dealing with a

Republican or a Democrat, that we are maintaining civility, that we are listening to each other, that we are willing to find areas of common ground and cooperation.

It's the same spirit that took hold of this city and this region in the days after Katrina, a spirit that has sustained you to this day. You didn't get tired. As hard as it was, you're still out there, still working hard, still rebuilding, still committed to your city.

I've talked a lot today about what steps we've taken at the Federal level to help the Gulf Coast recover and rebuild. But the true story is this community's unbending resilience. That doesn't start in Washington; it starts right here, in the reborn neighborhoods of New Orleans. It begins with the men and women who waded into deep water or climbed onto rooftops and risked their own lives to save people they'd never met before. It begins with the doctors and nurses who stayed behind to care for the sick and the injured without equipment, without electricity, like our Nation's Surgeon General, Dr. Regina Benjamin, mortgaged her house, maxed out on her credit cards so she could reopen her clinic and help care for victims of the storm.

All the volunteer firefighters from this city who recently traveled to Iowa to help another community recover from the devastation of a tornado, they went because they still remember when New York City firefighters who'd been through 9/11 came down to New Orleans to help folks out here after Katrina.

The story of this city's resilience begins with all the men and women who refused to give up on their homes, who stayed to clean up and rebuild, not just their own homes or their own yards or their own lives, but their neighbors' too.

Here at the University of New Orleans and at other colleges and universities in this city, this year's graduating class will be the first class that chose to apply to a New Orleans school after Katrina. Think about that. They knew what had happened here, they knew how much work was still left to be done, but they chose to come anyway. They wanted to be here.

Of all the signs of progress I've mentioned today, that's the most powerful: the idea there's still people coming to this city—especially young people—who are committed to its future, who are ready and willing to withstand what storms may come, eager to rebuild something better in place of what was. That's the kind of commitment and determination we need at this moment, not just here in New Orleans, but all across America. And if we can harness that spirit, I have no doubt that we will succeed in meeting our greatest challenges.

And I am grateful to all of you because I know that you are here because you believe in the possibilities of remaking America to become what it can be. Thank you very much, everybody. Appreciate you. Thank you.

All right. We're going to take some questions now. Now, here's—hold on a second. I'm going to get a sip of water.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Excuse me? Well, it's nice to see you. [*Laughter*]

All right. Everybody can sit back down. We're going to take some questions. Now, here's what we're going to do, is we're going to just—whoever has a question, raise their hand. I'm not going to be able to get to every single person. I'm going to go girl, boy, girl, boy, so you all don't—[*laughter*]—so nobody gets mad at me. And if—there are people with microphones in the audience, so when I call on you, if you can wait until you get the microphone and introduce yourself so that we know who you are. All right? I'll start with that gentleman in—right there.

Reverend, good to see you. You look good today.

Education

Q. Thank you, sir. I'm Reverend Smith from Rayville, Louisiana. And Mr. President, my question is that we have 30 percent dropout rate in the United States. And in my community, what we feel like in our community—we don't knock private schools, and we don't knock other schools, but in our community we took our dropout rate from a 13 percent to a .8. And we have a 97 percent attendance rate.

The President. That's excellent.

Q. We don't have any gangs in our schools. And our graduation rate went up from a 64 percent this year to a 73.5. And that's a concern to me, in the United States that we are losing so many young men, not only Afro American men, but all men.

And my question to you is that I know that my secretary of state—and I support you and him—we should not look at just different schools, but we should look at all of our children in all of our schools and target that, because no one school does not have all problems. We have problems.

The President. Well, look, there's a reason why I went to visit Martin Luther King Charter School, because as I said before, a good-news story about New Orleans—let's face it, the schools weren't working for the children of New Orleans before the storm. And what has happened is, is that this community has actually used the crisis as an opportunity to start rebuilding and try and experiment with new ways of learning.

One of the things that we did in the Recovery Act that got very little attention at the time, but I think is one of the most important things we did, is we said, we're going to help schools on construction, we're going to put money into the State so that the Governor doesn't have to lay off—or the local school districts don't have as big of a problem in terms of their budgets.

But what we also did was we set up something called Race to the Top, and what Race to the Top said is we're going to set aside $5 billion that States can compete for. But here is the deal: In order to compete for it, you've got to make sure that you're showing us how are you reducing the dropout rate and improving performance in low-performing schools; how are you improving teacher quality and really emphasizing teachers, because that's the most important thing in a school, is teachers, and are we giving them the support and the training that they need; how are you keeping effective data so that we know what's going on in these schools and people—kids aren't falling through the cracks.

So there are a whole series of things that we are initiating to try to be a good partner with States and local school districts, to raise our expectations, but also give them the tools.

I mean, one of the problems with No Child Left Behind was that it had a bunch of tests and had, I think, legitimately high expectations, but it didn't always follow through with the tools that schools needed in order to actually achieve these goals that had been set. So we want to provide those resources.

Now, Reverend, I think you'll agree with me when I say that I can work hard, States can work hard, city can work hard, every Government official can work hard to try to improve our schools, but if our parents don't insist on excellence from their children we won't succeed.

So that's why when I visited the school today—beautiful kids, I mean, they were just charming and smart, and they're sitting there and introducing themselves and describing all their projects, and they were very proud of their school—you could tell that the adults had invested in making sure that they understood they were important and they were special, but we also had high expectations of them. They were sitting still, they were—"yes, sir," "yes, ma'am." Just that home training makes a big difference.

Now, not every child is going to get the support they need at home, let's face it. But all of us, in one way or another, in our communities can be supportive of our children, helpful in making sure that they've got somebody, an adult that they can look up to. It can be in the church, it can be in a community center, but really giving our young people that kind of support, that's so—that's at least as critical—I would argue more critical—than what Government is going to do.

So that's a challenge not just to me, that's a challenge to all of us. Everybody has got to be involved.

All right? Okay, it's a young lady's turn; this young lady right here, you. [*Laughter*]

Domestic Violence Against Women

Q. Hi, Mr. President. My name is Narkise Barack.

The President. Is that right? Wow! [*Laughter*] You and me. [*Laughter*]

Q. And I'm a single mom of three daughters. I have my eldest here, she's 12 years old.

The President. Hey, you. What's her name?

Q. Yasmine.

The President. Yasmine? That's a nice name.

Q. Yes. And she goes to Lusher, which is one of the top schools here.

The President. Excellent.

Q. My question has to do with an article that came out today in the Times Picayune in which it reported that Tom Perrelli, the Associate Attorney General, was lauding local nongovernmental and governmental agencies in the effort to help women who were victims of domestic violence.

I know—I don't know if you know, but the rates of domestic violence rose quite dramatically after Katrina and have continued to rise. And one of the problems is we've got agencies that are helping women with things like therapy and food and help with their children. The problem is that our legal aid clinics—Tulane, Loyola, NoLAC—all of these clinics have been so overburdened with cases that have to do with Katrina, that a lot of people can't get access to legal help.

Now, the segment of the population that's most suffering from this are women, and by extension, children. You can sit in court in Jefferson Parish, in Orleans Parish, for a whole day and watch a whole docket of cases, and not a single woman has legal counsel. So I wanted to ask you—I know that you and Mr. Biden have been supporters of the Violence Against Women Act, and I was wondering what you can do to ensure that women in southeast Louisiana have their civil rights protected and their due process protected.

The President. Well, the—it's a great question. As I mentioned, speaking broadly, obviously, there continue to be concerns about crime in the region, post-Katrina. And not only have we helped to fund Mayor Nagin and others to be able to rehire cops and rebuild police stations and so forth, but also to build a more effective judicial system, because that goes with it. We've set up a violent crimes task force that is up and running and coordinates between the FBI and all the various local and State agencies.

So there are a range of steps that we've taken generally to address crime. But I think you're making a really powerful point, which is that when it comes to domestic violence, oftentimes that's underreported because women don't feel that they have the support they need in order to step out from those situations. The issue of legal representation is still a big problem.

So what I'd like to do is to learn more specifically about what's happening here. I will ask—I'll probably ask Tom Perrelli, since you mentioned him, who is deputy attorney general, to make sure that he investigates specifically how we can work more effectively with the legal aid organizations down here to provide more support.

So thank you for bringing that to my attention. That's great.

All right. It's a man's turn. It's a man's turn. I want to make sure—that gentleman right back there. No, no, you—yes, you, right there.

Gulf Coast Recovery

Q. Good afternoon. My name is Gabriel Bornay from here in New Orleans. My question is regarding FEMA reimbursements. [*Laughter*] Why is it 4 years after Katrina we're still fighting with the Federal Government for money to repair our devastated city? Delgado Community College, the largest vocational educational institution in the region, recently had to turn away 1,500 students because FEMA is only offering $19 million to repair buildings that suffered $40 million in damage.

We have also been without a full-service public hospital for the last 4 years because FEMA—[*applause*]—it's very popular. We've been without a full-service hospital for the last 4 years because FEMA is offering $350 million less than the true damage costs incurred. I mean, I expected as much from the Bush administration, but why are we still being nickled and dimed in our recovery?

The President. Well, look, let me say this. First of all, I will say to every single person in the gulf region, you could not have a better FEMA Director than we have right now. And I think our agency is working around the clock

to clear up redtape and to eliminate bureaucracy.

On backlogs that go back years, now, as I said, the—I know since a lot of these problems have been going on since Katrina happened, people understandably feel impatient. On the other hand, these things were not all going to be fixed tomorrow. So we are working as hard as we can as quickly as we can to process through many of these issues.

Now, you mentioned, for example, Charity Hospital. We are committed to working with the city and the State to make sure that we have world-class health facilities here in New Orleans. But what is also true is that there are all sorts of complications between the State, the city and the Feds in making assessments on the damages.

Now, I wish I could just write a check——

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. You say, "why not?" Well, you know, there's this whole thing about the Constitution and Congress and—[*laughter*]—not to mention the fact that, you know, I'm always—you know, one of the interesting things you find out about being President is everybody will attack you for spending money, unless you're spending it on them. You notice that? [*Laughter*] So we've got to go through procedures.

But here's the good news. For example, on Charity Hospital, I know the State has agreed to go through an arbitration process that Mary Landrieu helped set up that is designed to cut through and avoid a long, tangled mess, so that we can actually start rebuilding and providing services. Janet Napolitano has done a great job in creating a bunch of alternative mechanisms to resolve these disputes. And Janet, how many have we—what is it, 76 of these disputes that we've already resolved? At least, right? That's part of the reason why we sprung loose $1.4 billion of money that had been held up for years. Now, that may not be—sound like a lot of money to you, but it's real money.

So I guess my point is this: I make no excuses for the fact that Federal Government did not work effectively with State and local governments immediately in the aftermath of the storm to make sure that everybody got the help they needed right away. And we are still working through the backlog of problems that exist. But you know, I will say that I think not only Democrat Mary Landrieu, but also, I think, Republican Governor Jindal will tell you that our team is outstanding, they are working really hard all the time to try to get these things resolved as quickly as possible. And my expectation is, is that by the time that my term is over, you guys are going to look back and you're going to say, this was a responsive administration on health care, on housing, on education, that actually made sure that the money flowed and that things got done the way they were supposed to get done.

All right. It's a lady's turn. I'm going to—all right, the sister friend right here called out, so we'll get a mix here—right here. Latina.

Immigration Reform

Q. Yes. *Buenas tardes.*

The President. *Buenas tardes.*

Q. My question is, there's a lot of cases that have been mothers losing their children because of immigration. And the kids are lost in the system. I don't think that's fair. I know, you know, immigration is illegal, but we have to keep the families together. What is going to happen?

The President. Well, the—first of all, you're right that this is heartbreaking. The way to solve it is to solve our immigration problem more broadly. In the short term, Janet Napolitano is also in charge of immigration. She's got a lot of stuff on her plate, by the way; give Janet Napolitano a big round of applause. She's working hard.

In the short term what we're trying to do is to apply our immigration laws in a humane way that recognizes you don't want to just snatch a child from a mother. If the child is a U.S. citizen, even if the mother may not be, it's a very complicated problem. But the way sometimes this has been administered I don't think any of us would feel good about in terms of reflecting American values. All right, you've got a small child that suddenly gets sent into some foster care system, and the mother is sent away. So we've got to deal with that short-term issue.

The long-term problem, though, is the fact that we are a nation of laws and we are a nation of immigrants. So we believe in immigration. The vast majority of folks here, you all came from someplace else. And I don't have a lot of sympathy to folks who suddenly, once they're in, don't want anybody else to come in. That doesn't make sense to me.

But we're also a nation of laws. And that means that when there are people in Mexico City waiting in line and paying their fees and doing everything right, and they are having to wait for years, and then other folks are coming in without waiting in line, that's not fair. And it's not fair to them, and it's also putting enormous burden on, for example, our borders. And it's often unsafe. A lot of people die at those borders trying to cross them.

So what we're trying to do is to create a mechanism for comprehensive immigration reform that would have some basic principles. Number one, we would strengthen the borders. That has to be done. Number two, we would be serious about going after employers who are purposely hiring undocumented workers, because they don't want to pay a minimum wage or they don't want to pay them overtime or what have you.

You know, everybody talk—you know, you have these raids where they go in and they grab some undocumented workers. Yes, they broke the law, but, you know, they're just trying to feed their families. Go after these big companies that are purposely hiring those folks, because they're the ones who are actually taking advantage of the system. So that's the second thing.

The third thing then is we've got to figure out—we've got several million—it's estimated, let's say, somewhere between 10 and 15 million undocumented workers who live here. And they've been here for a long time and many of them have children here who are going to schools and are now U.S. citizens. And what I've said is the notion that somehow you are going to send all those folks back, you're going to line up a whole bunch of buses, and by the way, they're not all from Mexico—they're from Ireland, they're from Poland, they're from Ghana—because that's another stereotype, I think, that often gets promulgated.

Now, they have broken the law. So what I've said is, let's acknowledge they've broken the law, they've got to pay a fine, they've got to learn English, they've got to jump through a whole bunch of hoops, pay back-taxes. But let's give them a pathway whereby they can get right, they can get legal. And then that way we will not have these kinds of situations where families are potentially being pulled apart.

But it's—you've got to combine the two things. You know, sometimes there are those on the left who want immigration reform, but they don't want to acknowledge the fact that, well, we've got to strengthen our borders. And you can't just do one without the other. On the other hand, there are some folks who just say, "Just crackdown on the borders," but they pretend like somehow we're going to send back 12 million people, and we're not.

So let's just get serious about this and solve the problem. And I think that we've got an opportunity to solve it in the next year or two. All right? Thank you very much.

Okay, it's a guy's turn. It's a man's turn. The guy is trying to flash his credentials here. [*Laughter*] This gentleman right here, you. Yes, sir, right there.

Health Care Reform

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President.

The President. Good afternoon. What's your name, sir?

Q. Elliot LaBeaud, New Oreleanean all the way.

The President. There you go. Nice to meet you, sir.

Q. Welcome to New Orleans.

The President. Thank you, sir.

Q. My question is regarding health care reform. For years—well, I'm on Social Security and so is my wife, Peggy.

The President. Hey, Peggy. [*Laughter*] She's very attractive.

Q. Thank you. [*Laughter*] We've just celebrated our 50th anniversary.

The President. Hey, give a round.

Q. Thank you. Thank you. Regarding health care reform, we've been on Social Security for

a while. And every year up until now the Social Security Administration has announced inflationary increases. My question is this, is that what can health care reform do, or what will it do to help reduce the cost of Part B? Because Part B takes away what increases we've gotten in the past.

The President. Well, first of all, let me point out that under the formula Social Security would not see a COLA this year, an automatic COLA increase because we've actually had deflation, right? Costs have gone 6 percent. But because of the hardships that folks on fixed income have still experienced, I've been supportive of the idea that a one-time $250 payment to seniors would be an appropriate approach which would approximate—would come out to about 1.8-percent increase. Okay. So that just deals with the issue of what's going on with Social Security.

In terms of Part B and rising costs generally, here's what we believe health reform would do. First of all, it would contain costs generally—and this is not now our assertion, this is the assertion of the Congressional Budget Office, which is nonpartisan—that it would start lowering costs across the board because it would change how we use our medical system. Our medical system is so inefficient. We get five tests when we only need one. We have paperwork and bureaucracy all through the system. You go into a doctor, you have to fill out five forms. But you notice, this is the only area of the economy that's not digitalized. It's very easy for you—for the credit card companies to find you and send you your bill, but somehow you can never get a decent bill that makes sense and that you can read in health care because of all the paperwork involved.

So there are ways that we can streamline the system that will reduce costs, and that will help control costs not just in the private sector, but also for Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid.

Now, the other thing that is important is that one of the biggest costs for seniors is prescription drugs. And we are estimating that we can save a minimum of $80 billion, and it may be more, that will help close the doughnut hole on prescription drugs for seniors under Medicare. If you combine these various savings that would affect both Part B and Part D, then we actually believe that over the long term you would not see health care costs going up at 8 percent when your Social Security check is only going up 2 or 3 percent.

But the only way we achieve that is if we reform the health care system to slow health care inflation. And this is why—for those of you out there who wonder, "Well, what's in it for me? I've already got health insurance, I can see why if I didn't have health insurance that I'd want health insurance reform, but I've got health insurance through my job and it's working pretty well. Why do I want health insurance reform?" Well, here's why. I just told you that last year, inflation actually went down, I mean, we had deflation. Not so in health care. In health care, costs went up 5.5 percent. Your employers are experiencing increases of 15 percent on their premiums, 20 percent, their share that they pay for you. You may not see it in your paycheck, but they're paying it. And it's going up 15 percent, 20 percent, 30 percent.

How long do you think it's going to be before employers start saying, I can't afford this, so I'm either going to drop coverage for my workers or I'm going to start charging a lot higher out-of-pocket costs? That's already happening, isn't it? How many people have seen their costs go up on their health care bills?

So it's—your premiums have doubled, the average family's premiums have doubled over the last 10 years, and it is a certainty—this is not speculation, it is a certainty—that if we do nothing your premiums will double again over the next 10 years. It might only take five for them to double. And it is going to eat a larger and larger part of your paycheck. So even if you've got health insurance reform, we've got to control costs over the long term.

Now, you've heard a lot of funny tales about this health care reform bill, so let me just be clear here. Nobody is talking about cutting benefits under Medicare. Nobody is talking about somehow forcing you under Government plans to lose the health insurance that you have. All we're talking about is giving you some options, some better choices, and more security in the health insurance that you have, so they can't

drop you when you get sick, so you can still get health insurance with a preexisting condition, so you don't have huge, high out-of-pocket costs, so your employer, if you work for a small business, can go into an exchange and pool with other small businesses and other individuals to get a better deal from the insurance companies.

You know, nothing is harder right now to getting insurance than if you are self-employed or you work for a small business, because what happens is, you don't have enough workers for the insurance company to really want your business. So what we're going to do is we're going to set up an exchange; that means, suddenly you've got a million people bargaining instead of one. And that means you're going to get a better deal, and that means insurance companies who want the business of all those individuals and those small businesses are going to want to compete.

And by the way, I just want to warn you, even though we now have every committee in Congress having voted out a bill and we're closer than we've ever been, this is when the insurance companies are really going to start gearing up, because now they're—their stock went down when the Senate Finance Committee voted out that bill. Now they're getting nervous and they—by the way, they have been wildly profitable over the last decade, and this is when you're going to start seeing a whole bunch of those ads. And I just—if it says, you know, some funny named group out there that you can't really identify, you know, Americans for Good Health Care or something, but you've never heard of them before, it's probably a front group for the insurance industry. And don't let them fool you, we're going to get this done. We're going to fight for it.

All right? Okay, that was a man, wasn't it? Right there, all right. This young lady right there, right there. I broke your heart? Oh, come on. [*Laughter*] Go ahead, right here.

Environment

Q. Good afternoon, President Obama.

The President. Hi. What's your name?

Q. Okay. My question——

The President. What's your name?

Q. My name is Davida.

The President. Davida?

Q. Yes, sir.

The President. Hey, Davida.

Q. How are you?

The President. I'm good. [*Laughter*]

Q. Okay. President Obama, I'm not an environmentalist, and I'm not a scientist, but it doesn't take a genius to figure out that something is wrong in the environment if it's October, and the weather is as it is. [*Laughter*] I recently—I'm a Louisiana native, and I recently moved back home from California, where there, it was a big push for going green and environmental policies.

The President. Right.

Q. Here there isn't even a recycling program that's free in home. [*Applause*]

The President. Okay, all right, all right. Go ahead. Go ahead.

Q. My question for you is, in the midst of all the other important things such as health care, education, domestic violence, and all those things that you do have on your plate—and I recognize that—how can we make—or how can you, as the leader of the Government, make environmental policies more effective?

The President. Okay, well, the—it's a great question. Nancy, if I get into trouble let me know, because this is one of my top environmentalists; she knows what she's talking about.

Well, look, let me talk about some very specific things that we can do, and then let me speak overall about what a huge challenge it's going to be. We have already invested through the Recovery Act in probably the biggest clean energy investment in American history. I mean, we are providing tax breaks to businesses that are creating wind power and solar power and renewable energy. We are providing funding for the retrofitting of buildings that—so that they become more energy efficient. We are looking at weatherization programs where we can hire young people who don't have jobs to go in and start insulating buildings that will save people's energy bills over the long term.

So there are a lot of specific things that could be done both at the Federal level and at the State level. And I'll be honest with you,

I'm not familiar enough with what's being done specifically here in Louisiana, so that's why all these folks here have been taking notes. And I am sure that they will want to report back to you. [*Laughter*] They're going to want—you should give them your names, and they're going to—your name and your address and they will send you all the information about what's being done, because I'm sure they're doing some things here locally. [*Laughter*] No, I'm confident.

But, look, here's both the broader challenge and the broader opportunity. The challenge is that there's almost no dispute among serious scientists that climate change is real, and if the planet keeps on getting warmer and water temperatures keep on rising, there's almost no dispute among scientists that that means worse hurricanes, more frequently, more violent, and other shifts in weather patterns that are going to create drought and famine and displacement not just here, but around the world. We're pretty sure about that.

The second thing we know is that we used to be about 30 percent dependent on foreign oil; we're now about 70 percent dependent on foreign oil, which means that we just send billions of dollars over to somebody else, basically ship out their wealth. Now, Louisiana is an oil State; the Gulf Coast is, obviously, very important to our energy independence. And Mary Landrieu and others have been battling to make sure that Louisiana continues to build on its energy treasures.

But the fact of the matter is, is that if we don't think about using energy more efficiently, then we're not going to solve the climate change problem and we're not going to solve the energy independence problem.

Now, here's the good news, is that coming out of this recession, we're going to need a whole bunch of new areas of industry to employ people. And clean energy offers probably the best opportunity to become a huge engine for economic growth and innovation in our economy.

So what I think we need to do is to increase our domestic energy production. I'm in favor of finding environmentally sound ways to tap our oil and our natural gas. I'm in favor of—there's no reason why, technologically, we can't employ nuclear energy in a safe and effective way. Japan does it and France does it. And it doesn't have greenhouse gas emissions, so it would be stupid for us not to do that in a much more effective way.

But the most important thing we can do is to also develop new sources of clean energy and drastically ramp up our energy efficiency. And so I'm going to be pushing legislation after health care; I can't do it all at once. We've already got some progress out of the House; we're going to have some more progress to be made in the Senate. There are going to be disagreements, and I'll be honest with you, folks in Louisiana, a lot of whom are employed by the energy industry, sometimes are going to be suspicious about, well, how does this affect oil and how does this affect gas. And that's legitimate. That's part of the give-and-take process of our democracy. But I ultimately am convinced that we should be able to put together a package that puts people back to work, makes us more energy independent, and saves our planet in the process.

And I'm looking for partners from Government, but this is also an area where Government alone can't do it. You've got to be involved.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. There you go—this guy right here, he says he's ready to go. You know, for you to think about how are you using energy at home, how are you using energy in your businesses, are you buying long-lasting lights? Are you installing insulation that saves on your energy bills? All those things cumulatively make a huge difference.

There was an article today in the New York Times about the fact that one of the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases is all the natural gas leaks at factories. And it turns out that if producers would actually seal up those leaks, not only would it be great for the environment, but they'd also make money because that's money going out of their pockets from all those leaks.

So there's just a bunch of commonsense stuff that we could do that would make a huge difference. But frankly, everybody has got to chip in,

and the transition is going to take some time. And people don't like change sometimes. They're comfortable doing the things they're doing. I know a whole bunch of you guys—it took a long time before you decided that Hummer didn't make much sense when gas was 3.50 an hour [a gallon],* you know. [*Laughter*] You know, you like that big car until that gas went up to 4 and you said, "Man!" [*Laughter*]

All right. I've got time for one more question. It's a man's turn, isn't it? It's a guy's turn. Okay, here's—this young man, right here. I'm going to let him use my special mike. Hey, this is a big guy—don't go "aww." Come on, man, I mean, this is a—all right, what's your name?

The President's Popularity

Q. Terrence Scott.

The President. Terrence Scott. What do you have to say?

Q. I have to say, why do people hate you and why—they supposed to love you, and God is love and——

The President. That's what I'm talking about. [*Laughter*] Come on. That's what I'm talking about. Terrence, I appreciate that. What grade are you in?

Q. Fourth.

The President. You're in fourth grade? Well, now, first of all, I did get elected President, so not everybody hates me. Now, I don't want you to—[*laughter*]. I got a whole lot of votes. I want to make sure everybody understands. But you know, what is true is if you were watching TV lately, it seems like everybody is just getting mad all the time. And, you know, I think that you've got to take it with a grain of salt. Some of it is just what's called politics, where once one party wins then the other party kind of gets—feels like it needs to poke you a little bit to keep you on your toes. And so you shouldn't take it too seriously.

And then sometimes—as I said before, people just—I think they're worried about their own lives. A lot of people are losing their jobs right now. A lot of people are losing their health care, or they've lost their homes to foreclosure. And they're feeling frustrated. And when you're President of the United States, you know, you've got to deal with all of that. That's exactly right. And, you know, one—you get some of the credit when things go good, and when things are going tough, then you're going to get some of the blame and that's part of the job.

But you know, I'm a pretty tough guy. Are you a tough guy? You look like you're pretty tough. And so you've just got to keep on going even when folks are criticizing you, because as long as you know that you're doing it for other people, all right? So thank you. You're a fine young man. I appreciate you. All right. Give Terrence a big round of applause.

All right, everybody. I love you. Thank you. Thank you, New Orleans. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:15 p.m. at the University of New Orleans. In his remarks, he referred to Hieu "Kate" Hoang, wife of Rep. Anh "Joseph" Quang Cao; Phoebe Roaf, associate rector, Trinity Episcopal Church in New Orleans, LA; Surgeon General-designate Regina M. Benjamin; James Davis, economic development director, Rayville, LA; and Associate Attorney General Thomas J. Perrelli.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in San Francisco, California

October 15, 2009

Thank you. Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat. Now, I am not going to spoil a good dinner with a long speech. [*Laughter*] But there are some big thank yous that I've got to say.

* White House correction.

First of all, I've got to say something about my introducer. We are doing some tough stuff in Washington, and Mark is absolutely right that everybody has a story about Nancy's kindness and her thoughtfulness, her intelligence, her passion. I just want to say a little bit about her toughness. [*Laughter*]

Washington, unfortunately, I think, over the last several years has been engulfed with a climate that isn't just partisan, because we don't want to romanticize the past—things have always been partisan; that's the nature of democracy—but rather a sense that partisanship overrides the national interest. There's always been politics, but there's been a sense lately that goes beyond just the run of the mill politics; a sense that we are going to slash and burn and go after folks just because we want to win, as opposed to because we're trying to get something done. And as a consequence, being Speaker of the House is challenging job. You are constantly the target of attacks. And then there's the other party. [*Laughter*]

And yet, having now known Nancy first as a Senator and now as President, I can tell you that day in, day out, she faces down some of the toughest problems—not just policy problems, but political problems—that you can imagine, and she doesn't break a sweat. And she is willing to stare folks down and tell them how things are going to be. And that steel that Nancy Pelosi has is part of the reason why this has been such an incredibly productive Congress and why I'm so confident that we're going to end up getting health care done. And so I just want everybody to give Nancy Pelosi a big round of applause. I love Nancy Pelosi—love her.

Now, speaking of strong women, Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer aren't around, but Dick and Stu are here to accept their accolades. [*Laughter*] I love them as well, and they have been showing extraordinary leadership on a whole host of issues.

To the people who helped to set this up this evening—Mark Gorenberg, along with Wendy, have just been diehard supporters from the very beginning of this unlikely journey. I'm grateful to them. Azita Raji, Doug Hickey, Denise Bauer, Steve Westly, Wade Randlett, and Jeff Bleich: We are so grateful to you for your willingness to step up and to support Democrats not just right before an election, but during these, sort of, trials, these periods where everybody is impatient and trying to figure out why we haven't transformed the world overnight.

And all of you understand that when I ran for office and we talked about change, I think all of you understood that change wasn't going to be easy. Change is hard. In a country of 300 million people, change is hard. And then in a world with several billion, arriving at a time when we were on the brink of the worst—we were on the brink of a great depression, the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression; at a time when our relationships with other countries all around the world were strained, to say the least; at a time of two wars and great danger; and a sense that on a whole host of big challenges, from health care to energy to the way our schools work to how our courts work to how we engage with one another, that we had been stuck in a place that wasn't working for the future of the country. We had to understand that change was not going to be easy.

And what was so exciting about the campaign—not just mine, but the whole movement behind Democratic victories more than a year ago—was the recognition not just that people wanted change, but that I think the American people were hungry to take responsibility again for trying big things, for stretching out of our ruts and our comfort zones and our habits, and saying, "Well, let's see what it is that we can do to make this country work even better." We know we live in the greatest country on Earth, but, gosh, we also knew that there was this big gap between what was possible and where we were.

And so we came in, and we got busy. We went to work. And working with Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid, we decided that we were not going to shy away from the tough stuff. We decided we weren't going to read the polls and see how we could calibrate and make sure that we didn't offend anybody. What we said was, there are some big challenges that nobody has taken on for a long time, and we're going to take them on. And some of those challenges were not of our making, and we decided we were going to take them on anyway.

So we passed a Recovery Act that has now brought us back from the brink of recession and also ended up being the largest investment in clean energy and the largest investment in infrastructure and the largest investment in educational reform that we've ever seen. And then we—as Nancy already mentioned, we ended up saying, you know, it's time to put science back on the front burner, and we ended up making sure that stem cell research was possible so that it could save lives and cure debilitating diseases. And then we said, you know, it makes sense for us to make sure that women are paid the same for the same work, and we signed the Lilly Ledbetter Act. And we gave insurance to 11 million children who had been left out of the Children's Health Insurance Program. And we moved forward, and we said, we are going to bring the war in Iraq to a responsible close. And we're going to close Guantanamo. And we are going to ban torture. [*Laughter*] And we are going to once again achieve the kind of moral primacy that America had previously been known for. And that was the easy stuff. [*Laughter*]

If we stopped today, this legislative session would have been one of the most productive in a generation—if we just stopped. But we didn't want to stop. And so we decided, you know what, we're tired of going to town hall meetings and hearing stories about parents who were worried about their children's health care coverage. We're tired of hearing stories about families going bankrupt because somebody got sick. And we said, yes, we know the insurance companies aren't going to like it and the drug companies are going to be uncertain about it and there's going to be a whole bunch of contention out there. But after decades of watching health care costs soar and coverage decline, we decided, we are going to take on health care, and we are now closer than we have ever been. And I am telling you this, people, we are going to get this done in the next couple of months, because Nancy Pelosi is committed to it, Harry Reid is committed to it, and I'm committed to it. We are going to get this done for the American people.

We passed a historic energy bill out of the House, and we are now making sure that the Senate moves forward because it's good for our economy, it is good for jobs, and by the way, it's good for the planet. And when I hear babies, you know, yelping back there—[*laughter*]—they're asking, are you going to make sure that this planet is at an appropriate temperature? [*Laughter*] That's what they're crying about. They don't know English yet—[*laughter*]. They don't know English yet, but that's what they're saying. [*Laughter*] And so we're going to get that done.

And we're going to reform our financial regulatory system, because we can't afford to have wild risk-taking on Wall Street end up resulting in massive layoffs and people losing their homes all across Main Street.

So—and by the way, we're just slipping in probably the most aggressive education reform agenda that we have seen in a very long time, but that's just—[*applause*]—we're not highlighting that.

Now, just in—people ask, "Well, what's been going on in Washington?" I want to make sure that you guys are well informed. But I also don't want us to be complacent. I don't want us to be satisfied. We have to understand that folks are hurting out there. And they are scared, and many of them are angry, and although in some cases that anger may be misdirected, there's reason for people to be scared and to be angry. We've got the highest unemployment rate that we've seen in over 20 years. People are losing their homes. They're worried about the future. They're angry about the fact that even before this recession hit, their wages and incomes had flatlined.

And let's face it: Everybody in this room is very fortunate. There are a whole bunch of folks out there who just, day in, day out, it is a struggle, and they are working just as hard as you are and love their families just as much, and things are tough. And so when I wake up every single day, I'm thinking about how do I help those families, how do I make sure I'm putting them back to work. And it's not going to be easy, because we got into a big hole as a consequence of this financial crisis.

And then we've got real dangers all around the world. Iraq was hard; Afghanistan is harder. Iran seeking to develop nuclear weapons—that's

hard; the Middle East peace process—that's hard—these are not problems that are going to be solved overnight. They're not going to be solved in 9 months, they're not going to be solved in 18 months, and they may not be solved, all of them, in 36 months.

But the main message I have for you is that that spirit that we carried into the campaign, that spirit doesn't die. That conviction that we can do better and that sense that the effort we put in—our determination, our persistence, our willingness to stand up to all kinds of nonsense and just keep at it, day in, day out—that animating spirit is what is going to make sure that when my Presidency is done, whenever that is, and Nancy's Speakership is done, whenever that is, that we're going to be able to look back and we're going to say, you know, this country is better, that we have made a difference in the lives not just of people today, but hopefully people tomorrow.

So I hope that all of you guys understand we're just getting started. See, some of our opponents, they seem to think that they could wear us down. And I just want everybody to be clear: I'm not tired; I'm refreshed. [*Laughter*] I am fired up. I am ready to go. We are not going to stop until we get health care done, until we've got an energy bill that we're proud of, until we are fixing schools all across America. We are not going to stop. They're going to get tired; we're not going to get tired. We're going to keep on going.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. Love you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:29 p.m. at the Westin St. Francis hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Richard C. Blum, husband of Sen. Dianne Feinstein; Stewart Boxer, husband of Sen. Barbara Boxer; Democratic Party campaign contributors Mark Gorenberg, Wendy Wanderman, Azita Raji, Doug Hickey, Denise Bauer, Steve Westly, and Wade Randlett; and U.S. Ambassador-designate to Australia Jeffrey L. Bleich. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 16. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Reception in San Francisco
October 15, 2009

The President. Nancy Pelosi! Hello, San Francisco! Hey! How are you? Hello! It's good to see all of you. Thank you. Just a couple of quick special thank yous—I love all of you, but there are a couple people I want to make sure to acknowledge.

First of all, thank you, Tracy Chapman, for performing tonight—love Tracy Chapman. Lieutenant Governor John Garamendi, who is running for the California 10 upcoming election—everybody has got to go out there and work for John. There he is right—stand up, John, so everybody can see you. Fantastic.

Let me tell you about Nancy Pelosi. Somebody in an introduction was saying, everybody has a kind word to say about Nancy Pelosi, her generosity, her intelligence—all that's true. Let me talk to you, Nancy Pelosi is tough. [*Laughter*] I want everybody to know that. I mean, every day—every day—she is subjected to constant criticism and griping. And then there's the other party. [*Laughter*]

But with style and grace, but most importantly, with steely determination, she does not back down. She is there doing battle each and every day on behalf of not only her constituency here in California but people all across America who are looking for a fair shake, who are looking for a decent job, who are looking for quality health care, who want a good education for their kids, who want a planet that they can pass on to their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren. That's what Nancy Pelosi is all about. We could not have done any of the stuff that we've done this year without one of the best Speakers imaginable. So please, everybody, I know sometimes you're not a prophet in your own land, but I want everybody to understand how special Nancy Pelosi is and give her a big round of applause.

It's good to be back in California.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you too. I appreciate the warm welcome, especially the weather. [*Laughter*] It just got cold in DC, so I was happy flying in over the bay, and it's sunny, it's nice. [*Laughter*] This is a pretty place you guys live. But obviously, what I appreciate even more is the opportunity that you've given me and my administration to serve on your behalf. And I'm here to tell you that we are keeping faith with your support. We are working every single day to fulfill your hopes. Every day we're asking ourselves, how can we realize the dreams that led so many people to join our cause when it seemed so improbable?

But I've got to say, looking out at a room full of so many supporters, I am reminded of what President Lincoln once said to one of his own supporters who claimed that it was his efforts that made the difference in the election. The guy had come in, he met Lincoln, he said, "It's because of you—it's because of me that you're sitting here." "So you think you made me President?" Lincoln said. "Yes," the man replied, "under Providence, I think I did." "Well," said Lincoln, "it's a pretty mess you've got me into. But I forgive you." [*Laughter*] That's how I feel about you. [*Laughter*] You're all forgiven.

It's been about 10 months since the Obama family packed up and moved to Washington. And I want to report to you that Malia and Sasha are doing great. Michelle has been extraordinary as First Lady. We have Bo, which has lowered my seniority to fifth at the dinner table. [*Laughter*]

But I do think it's important for all of us to remember—even though it's been almost a year—what was happening in this country when we walked through that front door, because, you know, people seem to have a sort of selective memory. [*Laughter*] People seem to forget; they seem to think that suddenly, I was sworn in and there was this big financial crisis. [*Laughter*] So let's just do a little walk down memory lane. [*Laughter*]

We were facing an economic crisis unlike any that we've seen in our times. We were losing 700,000 jobs a month. Our financial system was on the brink of collapse. Economists of every political stripe were saying we might be slipping into the next great depression.

And that's why, working with Nancy Pelosi and working with Harry Reid, we passed boldly and swiftly a Recovery Act that's made a difference in the lives of families and communities in every corner of the country. And California has been particularly hard hit. And I know families here are struggling more than folks in a lot of other parts of the country. And leaders are having to make tough choices about how to navigate through this economic storm. But I also know that if it hadn't been for that Recovery Act, here in California and all across America, if it weren't for the Recovery Act, we'd be in a much deeper hole, and that is a fact.

We put a tax cut in the pockets of small-business owners and 95 percent of working Americans, just as I promised on the campaign trail. That tax cut has benefited more than 12 million families here in California at a time when they were losing income and, in some cases, losing jobs. Increased unemployment insurance for 12 million Americans to help them get through tough times; that's helped nearly 2 million Californians. We made COBRA 65 percent cheaper to make sure that when you are out there looking for a job you could still have your health insurance. We provided relief to States like California so they wouldn't have to lay off teachers and firefighters and police officers. Gave 30,000 loans to small businesses all across America, including nearly 4,000 right here in California, that have helped to create and save tens of thousands of private sector jobs.

But the Recovery Act wasn't just about tax cuts; the most progressive, by the way, tax cuts in American history. It wasn't emergency relief for middle class families and working families who've borne the brunt of the recession. It also was the largest investment in education in American history. It was also the largest investment in clean energy in American history. It was also the largest investment in the Nation's infrastructure since Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System back in the 1950s, putting people back to work all across

the country rebuilding roads and bridges and waterways.

That's not all we did in those first few months. Nancy mentioned a few other things. We decided maybe it makes sense to pay women the same as men for the same work. And that's why we signed the Lilly Ledbetter, the first bill I had the honor to sign into law. Lifted the ban on stem cell research—[*applause*]—began to restore science to its rightful place here in America. Extended health insurance to 11 million children across the country who had been left out, under the Children's Health Insurance bill. Passed legislation to protect consumers from unfair rate hikes and abusive fees charged by credit card companies. Passed laws to protect our children from being targeted by big tobacco companies. Made sure that housing fraud was prevented. Placed a new national policy for the first time in our history aimed at both increasing fuel economy and reducing greenhouse gas pollution for all new cars and trucks sold in the United States.

That's what we did here at home. Abroad, we began a new era of engagement. Working with partners to stop the spread of nuclear weapons and seek the long-term goal of a safer, more secure world free of nuclear weapons; working in concert with other nations on just about every continent to stem the global economic downturn and to confront climate change. We banned torture. We're closing Guantanamo. We're rebuilding our military. We're reaffirming our alliances. We are drawing down responsibly and ending the war in Iraq. We made good progress in taking the fight to Al Qaida, from Pakistan to Somalia to Indonesia. I went to Cairo on behalf of America to start a new dialogue with the Muslim world.

So just in case you're wondering what we've been doing over the last 9 months—[*laughter*]—thought it might be useful to check in with you. [*Laughter*] You wouldn't always know it watching cable. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Don't watch it!

The President. You said it, I didn't. [*Laughter*] But the reason you're here tonight, the reason I'm here tonight is because we know that our work isn't done. We still have enormous challenges in this country. There are far too many people out there who are really going through a tough time, out of work, seeing their hours trimmed, their wages cut, Americans who are subject to the whims of health insurance companies or who can't afford quality health insurance in the first place. Too many Americans who are seeing the American Dream slip further and further and further out of reach.

Part of what made our campaign exciting—you know, people tended to focus about—on our signs and hope. And, you know, it was easy to parody: "Oh, look, they're always talking about hope. They're so naive; they're so idealistic." You remember all that? [*Laughter*] "He'll never win." You remember that?

The reason the election motivated us was, yes, understanding that there's this huge gap between what America could be and what it was, right, a sense that we had to bridge that gap. But we knew change wasn't going to be easy. That wasn't what the campaign was about, this notion that somehow we figured we'd come in and after about 9 months, okay, we got that taken care of. [*Laughter*] That's not how the campaign worked. You remember us grinding that out? All those phone calls, all those knocking on doors, doors slammed in your faces, people couldn't pronounce my name. You remember that. That wasn't easy. So we didn't think that change was going to be easy.

But part of what was inspiring was understanding the effort that was going to be required. It gave us—it restored in us the sense that there are things that are worth fighting for, that there are things that are worth grinding it out, there are things that are worth taking some criticism for, that we're not just taking the easy road, that we're going to be responsible to make sure that the next generation has the kind of America that we all dream about. That's what the campaign was about.

So if there's anybody out there who's feeling a little disquiet—"Oh, gosh, people are being so mean"—[*laughter*]—for anybody who's thinking, well, maybe, you know, we're taking on—listen, I did not run for President and you did not work so hard to elect me and to make sure Nancy Pelosi was Speaker and Harry Reid was majority leader, you didn't work that hard to see me kick these problems down the

road. You didn't support our cause because you wanted to pass on these problems to some future generation.

We came together because we know that now is the time to secure our future. Now is the time to build a clean energy economy that will free ourselves from the grip of foreign oil and generate new green jobs in the process, jobs that pay well and can't be outsourced. You knew that now is the time to transform our education system so that every single child in America can complete [compete]* in this global economy. You knew that now was the time to place firm rules of the road so that banks can't game the system and the financial crisis on Wall Street doesn't end up hurting folks on Main Street. You know that now is finally the time to pass a health insurance bill that will provide coverage for every American and end some of the monkey business that these insurance companies engage in.

I don't have to tell you why the status quo is unsustainable. Seven million people in this State don't have health insurance. Millions more who do are seeing less stability, less security, higher premiums, less coverage. Premiums for California company—families who get insurance through their employer average more than $13,000 a year. Over the past decade, family premiums have shot up by 114 percent in this State, more than double.

With costs so high, it's no wonder that less than half of all small businesses in California offer health care coverage to their workers. The proportion of hard-working Californians without insurance has been rising; the proportion of Californians who get insurance through the workplace has been declining.

We know those facts. Here's the thing: We are so close to moving past this status quo. We are closer than we have ever been to passing health insurance reform, health insurance reform that will finally make quality care affordable for people who don't have it and bring stability and security to people who do and slow the skyrocketing health care costs that are crushing our families and our businesses and our State and our Federal governments. That's the kind of reform that all of us need to support right now, Democrat and Republican.

But I know this is a Democratic event. And I want to talk to all of you just for a second. You know, there are going to be some fierce arguments over the next couple of weeks about health care. There should be. This is big. But understand that the bill you least like of the five bills that got passed would all provide billions [millions]* of people who don't have coverage coverage, would all prevent insurance companies from barring you from getting health insurance because of a preexisting condition, would all set up an exchange so that small businesses could compete and get the same deal that big businesses do for their employees, would all provide subsidies to people who don't have health insurance and give them a measure of security. All of them.

So as we're going at it—and we're going to be going at it—[*laughter*]—I just want all of you to understand: We are going to get this done. We are going to get this done.

Now, to the non-Democrats who may be watching today—[*laughter*]—I want everybody to know, we believe in a strong and loyal opposition. I believe in a two-party system where ideas are tested and assumptions are challenged, because that's how we can move this country forward. But what I reject is when some folks decide to sit on the sidelines and root for failure on health care or on energy or on our economy. What I reject is when some folks say we should go back to the past policies when it was those very same policies that got us into this mess in the first place.

Another way of putting it is when, you know, I'm busy and Nancy busy with our mop cleaning up somebody else's mess, we don't want somebody sitting back saying, "You're not holding the mop the right way." Why don't you grab a mop? Why don't you help clean up? "You're not mopping fast enough." [*Laughter*] "That's a socialist mop." [*Laughter*] Grab a mop, let's get to work.

I think all of us in Washington have a greater purpose. We have a higher calling. And let me tell you, as long as I have the privilege of

* White House correction.

holding this office, I will do my very best to live up to my responsibilities to our country, to our children, to the future that we hold in common.

But I just want to remind you guys once again, because you're here tonight, you've invested a lot in this Democratic Party and invested in me, I want everybody to understand this is not going to be easy. It's not going to happen overnight. It's not going to happen in 9 months. It's not going to happen in 18 months. It's not going to happen in 36 months, some of the problems we're talking about.

Iraq was hard; Afghanistan is harder. There are—really are people out there who would be happy to blow up this room, wouldn't bat an eye. And we've got to deal with those folks. The dangers of nuclear proliferation are real, and it requires incredibly time-consuming, methodical negotiations in order to move us in a more peaceful direction.

I want everybody to know this, because I hope that the election was not just a fad.

Audience members. No!

The President. I hope that people didn't just think, well, that's done; that was fun; I really liked those posters. [*Laughter*]

I need you guys to understand that what we're trying to do is hard. And I want you to be excited by that. I want you to be energized by that, because if it was easy, it would have already been done. If it was easy, it wouldn't have been worth all the effort to get here. And I want everybody to know who are standing in the way of progress: I'm not tired; I'm just getting started. You can throw whatever you want at me—keep it coming—we're going to get this done. We're going to get health care done. We're going to get clean energy done. We're going to get climate change done. We're going to fix our schools. We are going to deal with the problems internationally that I was elected to deal with.

We are at a rare moment where we've been given the opportunity to remake our world for the better. And there's something about the American spirit, inherent in the American spirit: We don't hang on to the past. We always move forward. And that movement doesn't begin in Washington, it begins with you. It begins because the American people decide it's time to move forward. You decide it's time for change. And if you do that now, just as you did during the campaign, we are not only going to rebuild our economy, we are not only going to pass health care, but we're going to do what earlier generations have done. We are going to leave something better for our children, not just here in the United States, but all around the world.

So I hope that you aren't tired either, because I expect you to stand along with me as we get this business moving. Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8 p.m. at the Westin St. Francis hotel. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 16. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on the 20th Anniversary of the Points of Light Institute in College Station, Texas

October 16, 2009

The President. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you. So howdy, Aggies.

Audience members. Howdy!

The President. All right. It is an honor to be here with all of you today at this outstanding university.

Now, I was told that if the winds had been different today, President Bush would have parachuted in to kick things off here. That's the story. But that's okay. I am still thrilled to be introduced by this man whose vision of service we celebrate today and whose life of service is an inspiration to all of us.

And much to his likely embarrassment, I'm going to talk a little more about the singular nature and impact of that service in a minute. But before I do, I'd like to recognize several other people joining us today, starting with President Bush's extraordinary wife, Mrs. Barbara Bush. Where did she go, Madam First Lady? There

she is over there. As we all know, Mrs. Bush has an impressive record of service herself, particularly her tremendous work to promote family literacy across this country. And so we are very, very grateful for everything that she's done on behalf of our Nation.

We have our Secretary of Defense here, Secretary Bob Gates, who I think you know a little bit about. He has served for four decades under eight Presidents with integrity, with candor, with an undying commitment to keep this Nation safe. And I know how much he loved his time as president here at A&M, which is why he was relieved to hear about this week's game is out at Kansas State. I didn't want him sneaking away to relive his glory days leading yell practice, never returning to Washington.

But I can tell you—and I want everybody to understand this—although it is an enormous sacrifice for him to have left this institution, he could not be doing a better job on our behalf, and I want you all to know that I am very proud to have him as our Secretary of Defense.

I want to acknowledge former Secretary of State Jim Baker, who's served this country for decades as a trusted adviser to Presidents, and more importantly, as a statesman. I also want to thank another Texan, Ambassador Ron Kirk, for his terrific work as our United States Trade Representative. Former Senator Sam Nunn for his lifetime of service; I want to mention particularly Senator Nunn's visionary work on nuclear nonproliferation. And we have two outstanding Members of Congress who are here with us today, Chet Edwards and Sheila Jackson-Lee. Where's Chet? Chet's over there. I want to recognize Melody Barnes, Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council, for her outstanding work on service and many other issues. Stand up, Melody.

I want to thank Michelle Nunn, the CEO of Points of Light, as well as Neil Bush, chairman of the board, for their wise leadership. I want to congratulate Mallory Myers, today's Daily Point of Light Award winner, and commend her for her tireless work to pulling together "The Big Event," which I know is no easy task.

And I understand that this event is just one of the countless ways that students at this university are giving back to this community, from tutoring children and building homes, to raising money to fight cancer and AIDS, to continuing A&M's proud tradition of military service.

So I can see why President Bush chose to locate his library at this school. What you all are doing right here is precisely what he was talking about when he called for those thousand points of light and became the first President to create a White House Office devoted solely to promoting voluntarism.

It's a vision that's changed lives across this country, including that of a young woman who went to work for an organization called Public Allies to prepare young people for public service careers, an organization initially funded by the Bush administration. And her experience there inspired her to devote her own life to serving others, and that young woman happens to be my wife, Michelle Obama. And I've been instructed to convey her gratitude today as well.

But here's the thing. George Bush isn't just a President who promoted the ethic of service long before it was fashionable, he's a citizen whose life has embodied that ethic. From his daring service as a Navy pilot during World War II—enlisting the day he turned 18—to his time in Congress, at the CIA, and as U.N. Ambassador, Vice President, and President.

He easily could have chosen a life of comfort and privilege, and instead, time and again, when offered a chance to serve, he seized it. It was second nature to him, the continuation of a proud family tradition that he and Mrs. Bush clearly passed on to their children and grandchildren, and one which he's carried on throughout his quote, unquote, "retirement." How's that working out, Mrs. Bush? [*Laughter*] Spends it working tirelessly to help others, without fanfare or any expectation or desire for recognition.

Though I do recall one endeavor of his that actually drew quite a bit of attention. That was back in 2005, and some of you may remember this. He and President Clinton had agreed to come together to raise money for the nations

devastated by the tsunami that killed nearly 230,000 people in Asia, and that partnership between these two Presidents would continue in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

As first, longtime friends and aides to both of them were suspicious, let's tell the truth now. [*Laughter*] They were convinced that the other guy was using their guy to burnish his own reputation. That's how staffers are. But then when one operative expressed his concern to President Clinton, the President sharply rebuked him, replying, "This is much more important than politics."

This is much more important than politics. That's the conviction that drew these two outstanding leaders, once fierce adversaries, to join forces: the belief that there's some things that are beyond politics; that there's no place for partisanship when a great American city is underwater; that the R or D next to your name is irrelevant when nations in crisis need the world's help; that certain moments call on us to stop the back and forth and the bickering, to forget the old rivalries and embrace a common purpose that is bigger than our differences.

And while you might not always know it from watching the cable news shows or listening to folks on the radio, I think it's clear that we stand at one of those moments. We're seeing turmoil in our economy that's left many people wondering whether their kids will have the same opportunities that they had to pursue their dreams. We face threats to our health, our climate, and of course, our security that have left many of our young people wondering what kind of future they'll be leaving for their own kids. And if anyone here thinks that our government has all the solutions, President Bush and I will be the first to tell you that you'll be sorely disappointed.

Government can build the best schools, with the best teachers, but we can't run the PTA or chaperone those field trips or mentor those kids after school or have them sit down and do their homework at night. We can pass the most comprehensive health reform bill, but Congress can't be on the ground in our communities caring for the sick and helping people lead healthier lives. Government can give our troops the equipment they need and the pay and benefits that they have earned—and nobody is working harder at doing that than Secretary Gates—but it can't be there to offer a home-cooked meal to a military family stretched thin or to make sure our veterans get the respect and appreciation they deserve in their communities when they come home.

In the end, when it comes to the challenges we face, the need for action always exceeds the limits of government. While there's plenty that government can do and must do to keep our families safe and our planet clean and our markets free and fair, there's a lot that government can't and shouldn't do. And that's where active, engaged citizens come in. That's the purpose of service in this Nation.

And that's the point I want to emphasize today. That service isn't separate from our national priorities or secondary to our national priorities, it's integral to achieving our national priorities. It's how we will meet the challenges of our time.

To this day, despite all the evidence to the contrary, there's still folks with this notion out there that, well, service is nice, but it's not really essential; it's something you do once in a while to fulfill a requirement or to fulfill yourself or for a year or two after college to put off getting a real job—[*laughter*]—I'm talking to you—[*laughter*]—the notion that the real work of changing this country is done by people with fancy titles and big offices out of Washington, DC.

But history tells a very different story. It's the story of patriots who set forth the ideals that animate our democracy and all those who fought and died for those ideals. It's the story of women who reached for the ballot and people who stood up and sat in and marched for justice. It's the story of firefighters and police officers who rushed to those burning towers and ordinary people who rushed to the aid of a flooded American city.

That's always been the story of this Nation, the story of those who stepped forward in our darkest hours to serve it, those who rose to answer the defining questions of their time: Colony or country? Free or half free? Separate but equal or truly equal? Those folks weren't in it for the money. Those folks were volunteers.

Their service wasn't extra. It was the work that changed this country.

The courage, the patriotism, the compassion that drove them to act are the same qualities we need today as we seek to answer the questions of our own time. Will we continue to be a land of opportunity where all things are still possible for all people or a place where those born without advantages of wealth, health, and good luck have the deck stacked against them? Will we engage with the world to confront our shared threats or hope against hope to defer them to the next administration, the next generation?

The answer to these questions lie, in large part, with all of you, the young people especially who are here today. And that's why I feel so optimistic about our future, because you all are the most engaged, service-minded generation since the 1930s and forties, serving your communities in record numbers. Last year, applications to City Year tripled, and the Peace Corps had three applicants for every position. AmeriCorps applications were up 400 percent in just the first 4 months of this year alone.

Having come of age in serious times, you all don't have a lot of patience for pettiness and bickering and the worn divisions of the past. Rather than arguing about whether, or how, we should do something, you'd rather just go out there and get it done.

As President, it's my mission to put that passion and commitment to work, to build on the efforts of President Bush, Clinton, George W. Bush, and others to engage not just young people, but people of all ages and walks of life to serve their communities.

That's why I was proud to sign the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, expanding AmeriCorps and Senior Corps, other programs that give people the chance to give back. That's why we've created a new community innovation fund to seek out the most creative, effective nonprofit organizations in America, ones that could be the next Harlem Children's Zone or Teach for America, and replicate their efforts all across this country.

That's why this summer we launched United We Serve, a nationwide effort calling on all Americans to make service part of their daily lives. And we partnered with more than 400 organizations, made more than 250,000 service opportunities available on serve.gov, and watched as nonprofits and foundations and corporations and individuals spent hundreds of thousands of hours serving their communities.

So we've been doing everything we can to get people involved. And I'm pleased to have with us today my nominee to lead the charge on those efforts as CEO of the Corporation of National and Community Service, Patrick Corvington. Patrick, stand up and wave so we can all recognize you.

But I also want to be honest with you: While we'll do our best to make it easy to get involved, the service itself won't always be easy. People won't always appreciate what you're trying to do for them. You won't always make the difference you had hoped for. And let's be honest, some problems are so big, so stubborn, that even your best efforts will only help just a little bit. They might just help one person. They might just help one corner of a neighborhood. But those are the efforts that matter the most. It's through that struggle, the fact that it's hard, that the difference is made, not just for others, but for yourself. That's how you young people in particular will discover your strengths and weaknesses and the depths of your compassion and courage. It's how you will grow and how you grow closer to the people you serve.

And once you've formed those connections, you'll find that it's a little harder to numb yourself to other people's suffering. It's a little harder to convince yourself that their struggles aren't your problem. It's a little harder to just stand by as a bystander. Once you've tutored young people in a struggling neighborhood, it's hard not to care about that ballot measure to fund their school. Once you've volunteered at a food bank, it's hard not to care about poverty and unemployment. Over time, the needs of the people you serve become your stake in the challenges of our time.

See, in the end, service binds us to each other and to our communities and our country in a way that nothing else can. That's how we

become more fully American. That's what it means to be American. It's always been the case in this country, that notion that we invest ourselves, our time, our energy, our vision, our purpose into the very fabric of this Nation. That's the essence of our liberty, that we give back, freely.

You don't have to devote your entire career to service, though I hope that many of the students here will. But I'm asking you to have a public service mindset. I'm asking that no matter where you live or what job you do or what obstacles you face, you're always looking for ways to make service part of your life.

Whether through it's—it's through your workplace, your house of worship, or your local school, whether it's in your own neighborhood or another where the need is greater, whether you offer some special skill or just an extra set of hands and a sympathetic ear.

I know you're busy. I know that sometimes, even if you don't like to admit it, service can feel a bit like a chore. But if Mallory Myers can repeat last year's success and get more than 12,000 students to perform more than 20—a hundred—let me try that again—1,200—it's so much that it boggles the mind, Mallory—[*laughter*]—12,000 students and 1,200 service activities in this community—if Mallory can do that, then surely you can round up a few friends to volunteer in your community too.

Audience member. That's right. [*Laughter*]

The President. That's right. I got an amen back here. [*Laughter*]

If President Bush could fly 58 combat missions when he was younger than many of you here today and keep on fighting even after he was shot down and nearly captured by the enemy, then surely you can keep going when your service project gets a little tough. [*Laughter*] Don't you think?

If 11-year-old Erin Buenger, whose all-too-short life touched so many in this community, could travel to Washington and lobby Members of Congress for cancer funding while going through chemotherapy, if she could raise money by making lanyards and writing her own cookbook, all while making the honor role, then surely you can find the strength to serve even when you face challenges in your own life.

And that ultimately is the idea at the heart of President Bush's vision, that each of us has a role to play and all of us have something to contribute. He didn't call for one blinding light shining from Washington. [*Laughter*] Right? He didn't just call for a few bright lights from the biggest nonprofits; but he called for "a vast galaxy of people and institutions working together to solve problems in their own backyard."

And today, 20 years later, think for a minute about the impact that he's had. Think of the thousands of people and organizations who've been named Points of Light and the countless others he inspired to do their part. Think of all the people they touched and the lives they changed and all of those who were helped who went on to help others. That's the extraordinary ripple effect that one life, lived humbly, with love for one's country and in service to one's fellow citizens, can have. May we each strive to make that kind of difference with our own lives.

Thank you, President Bush. Thank you, Texas A&M. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:39 p.m. at Texas A&M University.

Remarks to Texas A&M University Marine Corps Cadets in College Station
October 16, 2009

I'm not here to give a long speech. I am here to say how proud I am of all the cadets here and all of you who are willing to give back to your country. I'm honored to be joined by one of the greatest public servants we've ever had and somebody who served—World War II and then served on the civilian side and eventually served as Commander in Chief, George H.W. Bush. Everybody please give him a big round of applause.

Assuming some of you continue with your military careers, you may be ultimately reporting to this guy. He had a little something to do with the Aggies a while back. [*Laughter*] Now

he's the Secretary of Defense, and I am so glad to have him here. Please give a big—Bob Gates a big round of applause.

So today was about service. All of you are showing why I feel inspired and I get up every day even when I'm a little pooped, is because I know that there are young people and a next generation that's coming out here and is going to make this country better and is going to protect this country. You guys are symbols of that. And so we are just very appreciative of everything you do. Know that your Commander in Chief draws inspiration from you.

All right, now I'm going to try to shake as many hands as possible.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:18 p.m. in the Marine Corps Mess Hall at Texas A&M University. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Message to the Congress on Trade With Haiti
October 16, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

The Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement Act of 2008 (HOPE II) (the "Act") (Public Law 110–246), amended the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act (CBERA) to make certain additional products from Haiti eligible for preferential tariff treatment. Under HOPE II, these imports from Haiti will continue to be eligible for preferential treatment after October 18, 2009, if I determine and certify that Haiti has met certain eligibility criteria set out in the Act.

Since enactment of HOPE II, Haiti has issued a decree establishing an independent labor ombudsman's office, and the President of Haiti has selected a labor ombudsman following consultation with unions and industry representatives. In addition, Haiti, in cooperation with the International Labor Organization, has established a Technical Assistance Improvement and Compliance Needs Assessment and Remediation (TAICNAR) Program. Haiti has also implemented an electronic visa system that acts as a registry of Haitian producers of articles eligible for duty-free treatment and has made participation in the TAICNAR Program a condition of using this visa system.

In light of these actions and in accordance with section 213A of CBERA, as amended, I have determined and hereby certify that Haiti: (i) has implemented the requirements set forth in sections 213A(e)(2) and (e)(3); and (ii) is requiring producers of articles for which duty-free treatment may be requested under section 213A(b) to participate in the TAICNAR Program and has developed a system to ensure participation in such program by such producers, including by developing and maintaining a registry of producers.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
October 16, 2009.

The President's Weekly Address
October 17, 2009

Over the better part of the past year, a great debate has taken place in Washington and across America about how to reform our health care system to provide security for people with insurance, coverage for those without insurance, and lower costs for everyone. From the Halls of Congress to the homes of ordinary Americans, this debate has helped us to forge consensus and find common ground. That's a good thing; that's what America is all about.

Now, as the debate draws to a close, we can point to a broad and growing coalition of doctors and nurses, workers and businesses, hospitals and even drug companies—folks who represent different parties and perspectives, including leading Democrats and many

leading Republicans—who recognize the urgency of action. Just this week, the Senate Finance Committee approved a reform proposal that has both Democratic and Republican support. For the first time ever, all five committees in Congress responsible for health reform have passed a version of legislation. As I speak to you today, we are closer to reforming the health care system than we have ever been in history.

But this is not the time to pat ourselves on the back. This is not the time to grow complacent. There are still significant details and disagreements to be worked out in the coming weeks. And there are still those who would try to kill reform at any cost. The history is clear: For decades, rising health care costs have unleashed havoc on families, businesses, and the economy, and for decades, whenever we have tried to reform the system, the insurance companies have done everything in their considerable power to stop us.

We know that this inaction has carried a terrible toll. In the past decade, premiums have doubled. Over the past few years, total out-of-pocket costs for people with insurance rose by a third. And we know that if we do not reform the system, this will only be a preview of coming attractions. A new report for the Business Roundtable, a nonpartisan group that represents the CEOs of major companies, found that without significant reform, health care costs for these employers and their employees will well more than double again over the next decade. The cost per person for health insurance will rise by about $18,000. That's a huge amount of money. That's going to mean lower salaries and higher unemployment, lower profits and higher rolls of uninsured. It's no exaggeration to say that unless we act, these costs will devastate the U.S. economy.

This is the unsustainable path we're on, and it's the path the insurers want to keep us on. In fact, the insurance industry is rolling out the big guns and breaking out their massive war chest to marshal their forces for one last fight to save the status quo. They're filling the airwaves with deceptive and dishonest ads. They're flooding Capitol Hill with lobbyists and campaign contributions, and they're funding studies designed to mislead the American people.

Of course, like clockwork, we've seen folks on cable television who know better waving these industry-funded studies in the air. We've seen industry insiders and their apologists citing these studies as proof of claims that just aren't true. They'll claim that premiums will go up under reform, but they know that the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office found that reforms will lower premiums in a new insurance exchange while offering consumers protections that will limit out-of-pocket costs and prevent discrimination based on preexisting conditions. They'll claim that you'll have to pay more out of pocket, but they know that this is based on a study that willfully ignores whole sections of the bill, including tax credits and cost savings that will greatly benefit middle class families. Even the authors of one of these studies have now admitted publicly that the insurance companies actually asked them to do an incomplete job.

It's smoke and mirrors, it's bogus, and it's all too familiar. Every time we get close to passing reform, the insurance companies produce these phony studies as a prescription and say, "Take one of these and call us in a decade." Well, not this time. The fact is, the insurance industry is making this last-ditch effort to stop reform even as costs continue to rise and our health care dollars continue to be poured into their profits, bonuses, and administrative costs that do nothing to make us healthy, that often actually go toward figuring out how to avoid covering people. And they're earning these profits and bonuses while enjoying a privileged exception from our antitrust laws, a matter that Congress is rightfully reviewing.

Now, I welcome a good debate. I welcome the chance to defend our proposals and to test our ideas in the fires of this democracy. But what I will not abide are those who would bend the truth, or break it, to score political points and stop our progress as a country. And what we all must oppose are the same old cynical Washington games that have been played for decades, even as our problems have grown and our challenges have mounted.

Last November, the American people went to the polls in historic numbers and demanded change. They wanted a change in our policies, but they also sought a change in our politics, a

politics that too often has fallen prey to the lobbyists and special interests, that's fostered division and sustained the status quo. Passing health insurance reform is a great test of this proposition. Yes, it will make a profound and positive difference in the lives of the American people. But it also now represents something more: whether or not we as a nation are capable of tackling our toughest challenges; if we can serve the national interest despite the unrelenting efforts of the special interests; if we can still do big things in America.

I believe we can; I believe we will. And I urge every Member of Congress to stand against the power plays and political ploys and to stand up on behalf of the American people who sent us to Washington to do their business.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:20 p.m. on October 16 at Texas A&M University's Rudder Auditorium in College Station, TX, for broadcast on October 17. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 16, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on October 17.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Significant Narcotic Traffickers Centered in Colombia
October 16, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1622(d), provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the emergency declared with respect to significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia is to continue in effect beyond October 21, 2009.

The circumstances that led to the declaration on October 21, 1995, of a national emergency have not been resolved. The actions of significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States and to cause an extreme level of violence, corruption, and harm in the United States and abroad. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to maintain economic pressure on significant narcotics traffickers centered in Colombia by blocking their property and interests in property that are in the United States or within the possession or control of United States persons and by depriving them of access to the U.S. market and financial system.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
October 16, 2009.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 19. The notice of October 16 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at Viers Mill Elementary School in Silver Spring, Maryland
October 19, 2009

The President. Here's the reason that I wanted to stop by for lunch today, and that is, I have heard great things about this school. I hear everybody here is reading all the time. Right? The motto here is?

Principal Matthew A. Devan. Viers Mill, what's our goal?

Students. Read! Read! Read!

Mr. Devan. Viers Mill, what's our goal?

Students. Read! Read! Read!

Mr. Devan. Because great readers have?

Students. Great choices!

The President. So you guys are readers. And so, being a reader myself, I wanted to come meet all these outstanding readers. Because you guys are reading so much and you're working so hard, you guys are doing great in terms of your test scores and how this school is doing. And so this was just a great example of how much improvement a school can make just in a really short time when you've got motivated kids.

So I wanted to come by and introduce myself, to say I'm very proud of you. I am hoping that you guys will continue to read, read, read, and that all of you are going to be really working hard not just this year, but all the way through high school and then all the way through college, because how many people here plan to go to college? Everybody, right? I just wanted to make sure everybody's going to college. But that means everybody's going to have to work hard.

So here's what I'm going to do. I didn't want to give a long speech. What I'm going to do is, I'm just going to come around, I'm going to shake people's hands, I'm going to say hi to folks, and I'm sure that somebody out there is going to be taking a bunch of pictures. [*Laughter*] And you guys can tell me what you've been reading. All right? So get ready to tell me what you've been reading lately and what's going on. All right? Okay, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Situation in Sudan
October 19, 2009

Today my administration is releasing a comprehensive strategy to confront the serious and urgent situation in Sudan.

For years, the people of Sudan have faced enormous and unacceptable hardship. The genocide in Darfur has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people and left millions more displaced. Conflict in the region has wrought more suffering, posing dangers beyond Sudan's borders and blocking the potential of this important part of Africa. Sudan is now poised to fall further into chaos if swift action is not taken.

Our conscience and our interests in peace and security call upon the United States and the international community to act with a sense of urgency and purpose. First, we must seek a definitive end to conflict, gross human rights abuses, and genocide in Darfur. Second, the comprehensive peace agreement between the north and south in Sudan must be implemented to create the possibility of long-term peace. These two goals must both be pursued simultaneously with urgency. Achieving them requires the commitment of the United States as well as the active participation of international partners. Concurrently, we will work aggressively to ensure that Sudan does not provide a safe haven for international terrorists.

The United States Special Envoy has worked actively and effectively to engage all of the parties involved, and he will continue to pursue engagement that saves lives and achieves results. Later this week, I will renew the declaration of a national emergency with respect to Sudan, which will continue tough sanctions on the Sudanese Government. If the Government of Sudan acts to improve the situation on the ground and to advance peace, there will be incentives; if it does not, then there will be increased pressure imposed by the United States and the international community. As the United States and our international partners meet our responsibility to act, the Government of Sudan must meet its responsibilities to take concrete steps in a new direction.

Over the last several years, governments, nongovernmental organizations, and individuals—and from around the world—have taken action to address the situation in Sudan and to end the genocide in Darfur. Going forward, all of our efforts must be measured by the lives

that are led by the people of Sudan. After so much suffering, they deserve a future that allows them to live with greater dignity, security, and opportunity. It will not be easy, and there are no simple answers to the extraordinary challenges that confront this part of the world. But now is the time for all of us to come together and to make a strong and sustained effort on behalf of a better future for the people of Sudan.

NOTE: The statement referred to U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan Maj. Gen. J. Scott Gration, USAF (Ret.).

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq
October 20, 2009

President Obama. Hello, everybody. Before I discuss the meeting that I've just had with Prime Minister Maliki, I just want to make a brief statement about Afghanistan.

I had the opportunity to speak with President Karzai this morning, and I wanted to congratulate him on accepting the certification of the recent election. As we all know, this has been a very difficult time in Afghanistan, to not only carry out a election under difficult circumstances, where there were a whole host of security issues that had to be resolved, but also postelection, a lot of uncertainty.

President Karzai, as well as the other candidates, I think have shown that they have the interest of the Afghan people at heart, that this is a reflection of a commitment to rule of law, and a insistence that the Afghan people's will should be done. And so I expressed the American people's appreciation for this step.

As I mentioned before, this has been a difficult election. You have violent forces opposed to democracy in Afghanistan. And yet despite these very difficult conditions, what we've seen is elections take place. We have now seen the IEC and the ECC in Afghanistan complete their work. We have seen the candidates expressing a willingness to abide by constitutional law, and there is a path forward in order to complete this election process.

I want to give particular thanks to Ambassador Karl Eikenberry and his team, who have been working tirelessly throughout this process. I also want to commend Senator John Kerry, who was in the region traveling and ended up working extensively with Ambassador Eikenberry and was extraordinarily constructive and very helpful. So I think he deserves great congratulations.

Moving forward, we will continue to work with our ISAF partners as well as the Afghan Government, however this election turns out, to ensure that we can move the Afghan—that we can move Afghanistan towards peace and security and prosperity and that the will of the Afghan people is ultimately done. So we are pleased with the steps that have been taken today, and we hope that we can build on this progress.

I finally want to thank the incredible work of our U.S. military and the young men and women who are stationed in Afghanistan who are doing so much to help bring about a more secure and prosperous and democratic Afghanistan.

I am grateful to have the opportunity to see Prime Minister Maliki once again. We had a wide-ranging discussion about the continuing progress that Iraq is making. We have seen in the last several months a consolidation of a commitment to democratic politics inside of Iraq. We are very interested, both of us, in making sure that Iraq has an election law that is completed on time so that elections can take place on time in January. That is consistent with the transition that has been taking place, and I reemphasized my commitment to Prime Minister Maliki that we will have our combat troops out of Iraq by August of next year and all of our troops out of Iraq by 2011.

But we didn't just talk about military and security issues. What is wonderful about this trip is that it represents a transition in our bilateral relationship, so that we are moving now to issues beyond security and we are beginning to talk about economy, trade, commerce. The business and investment conference that's taking place is going to be very well attended. It

includes not only Prime Minister Maliki but business leaders from both the United States and Iraq. We've seen over the last several months progress being made on providing clarification about investment laws inside of Iraq. There are, obviously, enormous opportunities for our countries to do business together.

And so I just want to congratulate Prime Minister Maliki on what I'm confident will be a successful conference and to reemphasize my administration's full support for all the steps that can be taken so that Iraq can not only be a secure place and a democratic country but also a place where people can do business, people can find work, families can make a living, and children are well educated. And that broader sense of a U.S. relationship with a democratic Iraq is one that I think all of us are confident we can now achieve.

So thank you so much, Mr. Prime Minister, for your presence here today.

And I don't know if you—maybe we could translate the last part just about Iraq, as opposed to Afghanistan, just in case there's some——

[*At this point, an Arabic translation of the President's remarks was provided to Prime Minister Maliki.*]

Prime Minister Maliki. Thank you, Mr. President, and this opportunity to hold the business investment conference is a big economic demonstration and manifestation of the importance of this event that brings together more than 1,000 business entrepreneurs and a very distinguished, high-level Iraqi delegation.

I have also discussed with President Obama the various issues and the fact that our relations today have moved along and not only confined to the security cooperation but today have moved to the economic development and to providing prosperity for the Iraqi people.

We have discussed the issues of common interest to our bilateral relations under the—that are today framed under the strategic framework agreement and the various sectors, and all this is important for broader relation of our two nations.

We have also discussed the issue of the elections and the importance that these elections be held on time based on the national principles. We have also commented on the role of the United States that supports Iraq and the importance to end the international sanctions on Iraq and to remove Iraq from under chapter 7, because we don't have weapons of mass destructions anymore, and today, that we have put forth a lot of common sacrifices, and today, that there is a pluralistic political system in Iraq. This is important to move Iraq forward and to promote investments.

We will follow up on the outcome of the business investment conference in its various sectors because today, Iraq has moved beyond a dictatorship and beyond the destruction, and we are trying to rebuild all our sectors of agriculture, oil sectors, tourism, and so forth. We want to give the U.S. companies an opportunity to be present in investing in Iraq, and all this cooperation on the basis of the strategic framework agreement.

I thank you very much.

President Obama. Okay, thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; and U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl W. Eikenberry. He also referred to the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission of Afghanistan. Prime Minister Maliki spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks on Presenting the Presidential Unit Citation to Alpha Troop, 1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry

October 20, 2009

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome to the White House. And welcome to a moment nearly 40 years in the making. Now, last month, I was privileged to

present the parents of an American soldier, Sergeant First Class Jared Monti, with our Nation's highest decoration for valor, the Medal of Honor. Today we celebrate the awarding of our Nation's highest honor for a military unit, the Presidential Unit Citation.

The Presidential Unit Citation is awarded for "gallantry, determination, and esprit de corps in accomplishing its mission under extremely difficult and hazardous conditions." And since its creation during the Second World War, it has only been bestowed about 100 times. Today another unit assumes its rightful place in these ranks: Alpha Troop, 1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry, the legendary Blackhorse Regiment.

To mark this occasion we're joined by Congressman—and Vietnam veteran—Leonard Boswell; vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Jim "Hoss" Cartwright; John McHugh, our Army Secretary; and Vice Chief of Staff Peter Chiarelli; from Fort Irwin, California, leaders of today's 11th Armored Cavalry, Colonel Paul Laughlin and Command Sergeant Major Martin Wilcox; and most of all, the men of Alpha Troop—those behind me and some 100 here today. Now, these men might be a little bit older, a little bit grayer, but make no mistake, these soldiers define the meaning of bravery and heroism. It was March 1970, deep in the jungles of Vietnam. And through the static and crackle of their radios, Alpha Troop heard that another unit was in trouble. Charlie Company, from the 1st Calvary Division, had stumbled upon a massive underground bunker of North Vietnamese troops. A hundred Americans were facing some 400 enemy fighters. Outnumbered and outgunned, Charlie Company was at risk of being overrun. And that's when Alpha Troop's captain gave the order: "Saddle up and move out."

As these men will tell you themselves, this isn't the story of a battle that changed the course of a war. It never had a name, like Tet or Hue or Khe Sanh. It never made the papers back home. But like countless battles, known and unknown, it is a proud chapter in the story of the American soldier.

It's the story of men who came together, from every corner of America, of different colors and creeds; some young—just 18, 19 years old—and just weeks in the jungle; some older—veterans hardened by the ugliness of war; noncommissioned officers who held the unit together and the officers assigned to lead them.

It's the story of how this team of some 200 men set out to save their fellow Americans. With no roads to speak of, they plowed their tanks and armored vehicles through the thick jungle, smashing a path through bamboo and underbrush, mile after mile, risking ambush and landmines every step of the way, and finally emerging from the jungle to the rescue, what one member of Charlie Company called a miracle.

It's a story of resolve. For Alpha Troop could have simply evacuated their comrades and left that enemy bunker for another day, to ambush another American unit. But as their captain said, "That's not what the 11th Cavalry does."

And so ultimately, this is a story of what soldiers do, not only for their country but for each other: the troopers who put themselves in the line of fire, using their tanks and vehicles to shield those trapped Americans; the loaders who kept the ammunition coming, and the gunners who never let up; and when one of those gunners went down, the soldier who jumped up to take his place.

It's about the men who rushed out to drag their wounded buddies to safety; the medics who raced to save so many; the injured who kept fighting hour after hour. And finally, with dark falling, as the convoy made the daring escape back through the jungle, these soldiers remained vigilant, protecting the wounded who lay at their feet.

The fog of war makes a full accounting impossible. But this much we know: Among the many casualties that day, some 20 members of Alpha Troop were wounded, and at least 2 made the ultimate sacrifice, their names now among the many etched in that black granite wall not far from here. But because of that service, that sacrifice, Alpha Troop completed its mission: It rescued Charlie Company. It saved

those 100 American soldiers, some of who join us today. And those soldiers went on to have families, children and grandchildren who also owe their lives to Alpha Troop.

Now, some may wonder, after all these years, why honor this heroism now? And the answer is simple: Because we must, because we have a sacred obligation. As a nation, we have an obligation to this troop. Their actions that day went largely unnoticed—for decades—until their old captain, John Poindexter, realized that their service had been overlooked. He felt that he had a right to wrong. And so he spent years tracking down his troopers and gathering their stories, filing reports, fighting for the Silver Stars and Bronze Stars they deserved and bringing us to this day. Thank you, John.

We have an obligation to all who served in the jungles of Vietnam. Our Vietnam vets answered their country's call and served with honor. But one of the saddest episodes in American history was the fact that these vets were often shunned and neglected, even demonized, when they came home. That was a national disgrace. And on days such as this, we resolve to never let it happen again.

Many of our Vietnam vets put away their medals, rarely spoke of their service, and moved on. They started families and careers. Some rose through the ranks, like the decorated Vietnam veteran that I rely on every day, my National Security Adviser, Jim Jones.

Indeed, I'm told that today is the first time in 39 years that many from Alpha Troop have pulled out their medals and joined their old troop. Some of you still carry the shrapnel and the scars of that day. All of you carry the memories. And so I say, it's never too late. We can never say it enough: To you and all of those who served in Vietnam, we thank you. We honor your service, and America is forever grateful.

And today also reminds us of our obligations to all our veterans, whether they took off the uniform decades ago or days ago, to make sure that they and their families receive the respect they deserve and the health care and treatment they need, the benefits they have earned and all the opportunities to live out their dreams.

And finally, if that day in the jungle, if that war long ago, teaches us anything, then surely it is this: If we send our men and women in uniform into harm's way, then it must be only when it is absolutely necessary. And when we do, we must back them up with the strategy and the resources and the support they need to get the job done.

This includes always showing our troops the respect and dignity they deserve, whether one agrees with the mission or not. For if this troop and our men and women in uniform can come together, from so many different backgrounds and beliefs, to serve together and to succeed together, then so can we. So can America.

I cannot imagine a more fitting tribute to these men, who fought in what came to be called the "Anonymous Battle." Troopers, you are not anonymous anymore. And with America's overdue recognition also comes responsibility, our responsibility as citizens and as a nation, to always remain worthy of your service.

God bless Alpha Troop and the 11th Armored Cavalry. God bless all those who wear this Nation's uniform. And God bless the United States of America.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:24 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Paul and Janet E. Monti, parents of SFC Jared C. Monti, USA, who was killed in action in Afghanistan on June 21, 2006.

Remarks to Joint Terrorism Task Force Staff Members in New York City
October 20, 2009

Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Please be seated. Thank you so much. It is great to be here today, and I am honored to spend some time with the men and women who are working so hard, around the clock, to keep not only this city but also this country safe from terrorism.

I want to thank our outstanding FBI Director, Robert Mueller, for that kind and brief

introduction. As I've said before, these are incredibly challenging times for the FBI. And for the last 8 years, Bob has worked tirelessly to prevent additional attacks and keep this Nation safe. He's been doing a unbelievable job under very difficult and trying circumstances, and we are grateful to him.

I also want to commend Police Commissioner Kelly, Assistant Director in Charge Joe Demarest, and all the leaders who've helped to put together a team that is more integrated and more collaborative and more effective than ever before.

Here at the Joint Terrorism Task Force, we have folks from the FBI working side by side with some of New York's finest, as well as countless Federal, State, and local partners. I was taking a look at the list, and it looks like 45, 46 different agencies represented here. And together, your success in thwarting terrorist attacks—the strong intelligence you've gathered and the hard-nosed investigations you've pursued—has proved to be a model for law enforcement officials across the country, and for that you should all be extremely proud.

No one knows better than you how important this work is, because you've always been on the frontlines in fighting extremism. Last month, we marked the eighth anniversary of the attacks on 9/11. And on that terrible day, when terrorists brought so much death and destruction on our shores and so many lives were lost, many of you were the first on the scenes, saving lives, working tirelessly to bring those responsible to justice, and guarding against future attacks in subsequent weeks and months and years.

And that effort continues to this day, quietly, doggedly, courageously. Most New Yorkers, much less most Americans, probably don't know this office is here, and they don't know what you do. Obviously, you're not doing it for the glamour or the glory or the pay. [*Laughter*] You do it to serve and protect your country. And because of the effort and sacrifices that you're making on a daily basis, we are making real progress on our core missions of disrupting and dismantling and, ultimately, defeating Al Qaida and its extremist allies.

I said this when I had a chance to speak to some of the NYPD leadership team last month over the phone, but I particularly want to express my appreciation and admiration for your terrific work, especially in the recent weeks. Working together, you saved countless lives, and your collaboration earned the respect and gratitude not just of New Yorkers but Americans everywhere.

This level of cooperation and integration is going to be critical in defeating the type of determined and resourceful—and oftentimes in the shadows—opponents that you're up against every day. Nerve centers like this one help you share intelligence, answer questions, and give support instantly. And because each organization is on its own, this task force has shown how much stronger all of you can be when you're actually working together.

You're setting the standard for everybody else, as I said, and you're showing what focused and integrated counterterrorism work really looks like. And the record of your service is written in the attacks that never occur because you thwarted them, and because of the countless Americans who are alive today as a consequence of that work. And so America is in your debt for that.

Of course, we all know that we're facing a determined adversary. They are resourceful, they are resilient, they are still plotting, as we have become all too aware. No one can ever promise that there won't be another attack on America's soil. But I can promise you this: I pledge to do everything in my power as President of the United States to keep the American people safe. And that means I pledge to give all of you the tools and the support that you need to get the job done, both here at home and around the world. And I pledge that I will stay as focused on this mission as you are.

So we all have to redouble our efforts in the face of threats that persist. We're going to have to draw strength from the values that we hold dear. We're going to have to keep our eye fixed on the world we seek to build , one that not just—not only defeats our adversaries but that also promotes dignity and opportunity and justice for all who stand with us.

And to do that, I'm going to need all of you to continue the extraordinary work you do and the collaborations you do. That's how we're going to prevail in this fight. That's how we're going to protect this country that we love.

So I know that all of you are extraordinarily busy, and I do not want to draw you away from the work that you do. I just want to let you know that we appreciate it, we acknowledge it, we thank you for it, and I am going to continue to be standing behind you each and every step of the way. So thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:24 p.m. at the Joint Terrorism Task Force Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Raymond W. Kelly, commissioner, New York City Police Department; and Joseph M. Demarest, Jr., Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Division.

Statement on the Presidential Election in Afghanistan
October 20, 2009

I welcome President Karzai's statement today accepting the independent electoral commission's certification of the August 20 election results and agreeing to participate in a second round of the election. This is an important step forward in ensuring a credible process for the Afghan people which results in a Government that reflects their will.

While this election could have remained unresolved to the detriment of the country, President Karzai's constructive actions established an important precedent for Afghanistan's new democracy. The Afghan Constitution and laws are strengthened by President Karzai's decision, which is in the best interests of the Afghan people.

I congratulate the Afghan people on the patience and resilience they have shown throughout this long election process. Given Afghanistan's recent history, it is extraordinary that they were able to overcome threats and violence to express their democratic right to choose their leader. Insecurity in the country prevented some Afghans from voting, but it is a testimony to the bravery of the Afghan people that so many of them did come out to vote in the first round under tremendously difficult circumstances.

I commend both the independent electoral commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission for carrying out their mandates. Throughout this process, the United States has been interested above all in the strength and independence of those institutions and the need for them to fulfill their mandate on behalf of all Afghans.

I congratulate President Karzai and Dr. Abdullah, who both earned the support of voters from across the country. I also commend all of the other Presidential candidates who made this such a vibrant campaign.

It is now vital that all elements of Afghan society continue to come together to advance democracy, peace, and justice. We look forward to a second round of voting and the completion of the process to choose the President of Afghanistan. In that effort, the United States and the international community are committed to partnering with the Afghan people.

NOTE: The statement referred to Afghan Presidential candidate Abdullah Abdullah.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Situation in or in Relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo
October 20, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the situation in or in relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the related measures blocking the property of certain persons contributing to the conflict in that country, are to continue in effect beyond October 27, 2009.

The situation in or in relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has been marked by widespread violence and atrocities that continue to threaten regional stability, continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency to deal with that threat and the related measures blocking the property of certain persons contributing to the conflict in that country.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
October 20, 2009.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 21. The notice of October 20 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in New York City
October 20, 2009

Hello, everybody! Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you. Please, everybody have a seat. Back to your salads—[*laughter*]—or whatever they're serving.

It is good to be back in New York—always great to be in New York. I—for those Yankee fans out there, you're still up 2 to 1. You should be all right. I love this town, and I—want to know how much I appreciate everything that so many of the people in this room have done, not just for me, but for the country as a whole. And there are a lot of folks here who were on the frontlines of our campaign and people who devoted their time and their energy and their reputations to backing some guy nobody had ever heard of. [*Laughter*] I will never forget that. And not a day goes by that I don't think about the obligations that I have as a consequence of this extraordinary honor that's been bestowed on me, the obligation I've got to every American and everybody who put their hopes into a cause that wasn't just about winning an election, but was about changing the country.

Now, it's been 9 months since the Obama family packed up and moved to Washington. And I want to report that Malia and Sasha are doing very well. I got more requests for Malia and Sasha meetings during the photo line than—[*laughter*]—you can't afford a fundraiser involving Malia and Sasha. [*Laughter*] I just want you to know. I'm cheap. [*Laughter*] You guys can't afford that.

They are doing great. Michelle is, obviously, an extraordinary First Lady. And we've got Bo, my dog, who—I now rank fourth in influence in the house—[*laughter*]—behind Michelle,

Malia, and Sasha. I'm slightly ahead of Bo. [*Laughter*] But he's coming on fast. [*Laughter*]

It's important for all of us to remember, I think, what was happening less than a year ago when we walked into the Oval Office, because I notice that there's been a little bit of selective memory going on, some collective amnesia on the part of some folks about what we were facing. We were seeing an economic crisis unlike any that we had seen in generations. We were losing 700,000 jobs per month. Our financial system was on the brinks—brink of collapse. Economists of every stripe were suggesting that we might slip into a great depression. That was just 9 months ago.

And think about what we've done since that time. We acted boldly and swiftly to pass a Recovery Act that's made a difference in the lives of families across America. As promised, we put a tax cut in the pockets of 95 percent of working families in America—the most progressive tax cut in history—benefiting 7 million families right here in New York.

We extended and increased unemployment insurance to help 12 million people get by during tough times. That's helped more than a million folks here in New York. We made COBRA 65 percent cheaper so that if people were out there looking for jobs, they could actually still keep health care for themselves and their families.

We provided relief to States, including New York, to make sure that teachers and firefighters and police officers weren't laid off. According to initial reports, this has saved some 250,000 jobs in our schools all across America—250,000 jobs; teachers that would have been laid off had it not been for the Recovery Act. We've supported more than 30,000 loans to small businesses, including nearly 2,000 in this State, helping to create thousands of private sector jobs.

But the Recovery Act wasn't just about tax cuts; it wasn't just about providing emergency relief for middle class families and working families who bore the brunt of this recession. It was also the largest investment in education in American history. Think about that: The largest investment in education in American history, and one that is promoting reform in States all across the country. It was the largest investment in clean energy in American history. It was the largest boost to medical research and basic research in American history. And it was the single largest investment in our Nation's infrastructure since Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System in the 1950s, an investment that's putting people to work all across this country rebuilding not just our roads and our bridges and crumbling schools, but also creating a whole new infrastructure, a smart grid to help clean energy travel from where it's produced to where it's needed, broadband lines extending into communities that don't have it.

So that was pretty good for the first month. [*Laughter*] And then we kept on going, and we passed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, because I think women should get paid the same as men for doing the same work. We lifted the ban on stem cell research to begin restoring science to its rightful place in America. We extended health insurance to 11 million children in America, 4 million of whom previously had no insurance at all.

We passed a service bill named for Ted Kennedy, which is encouraging folks to give back to their communities all across the country, expanding Peace Corps and AmeriCorps. We passed legislation to protect consumers from unfair rate hikes and the most comprehensive credit card reform legislation in a generation.

We passed laws to make sure that our children weren't being targeted by big tobacco companies, housing fraud legislation. These were all things that we had been fighting for years that we signed into law in the first 9 months.

And for the first time in history, we've begun to put in place a new national policy aimed at both increasing fuel economy and reducing greenhouse gas pollution for all new cars and trucks sold in the United States.

And while I was in line, I was talking to a few folks who are involved in the environmental movement, and they will affirm—we're not doing this with a lot of fanfare—that we have been as productive in cleaning our environment and focusing on the big challenges having to do with our air and our water as any administration that's been around in a very long time—for

decades. If we stop now, if we didn't do anything else for the next 3 months, we would have had one of the most productive legislative sessions in decades already.

Now, that's what we've been able to do at home. I've got a few things going on abroad. [*Laughter*] We've begun a new era of engagement. We're working with our partners to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, to seek the long-term goal of a safer, more secure world that is free of nuclear weapons. We are—we're working in concert with nations on just about every continent to stem our global economic downturn and to confront climate change. We banned torture. We're rebuilding our military. We're reaffirming our alliances. We've begun to leave Iraq to its own people. We've made progress in taking the fight to Al Qaida, from Pakistan to Somalia to Indonesia. And we're making progress there too.

But the reason you're here tonight, the reason I'm here tonight, the reason Tim Kaine is doing such an extraordinary job as our DNC chair, even though he's got another job as Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, is because we all know our work is far from over. There's still far too many Americans who are out of work right now; they're seeing their hours and their wages reduced. There are too many Americans who are subject to the whims of the insurance companies when it comes to their health care, being dropped or discriminated against because they've got a preexisting condition. Too many millions can't afford insurance in the first place.

We know that we still face enormous challenges in this country, and that's not news to you. Lately, there had been some discussion, you know, "What's taking him so long?" Health care seems to—it's been 9 months, we haven't solved world hunger yet. [*Laughter*] And I try to explain to people, part of what was remarkable about the campaign that we ran was it wasn't easy. That's how we knew it was worth it. We knew we were fighting against the status quo and fighting against inertia. And it took a lot of hard work and a lot of effort and a lot of defying the odds. That was part of what made it special.

And I know you guys didn't sign up for this election because I was a sure thing. And you didn't sign up because you thought that somehow all the fun stuff of the election would just keep on continuing into governing. You know, the poster was nice; we had "Yes we can," nice slogans—[*laughter*]—but that's not why you did this. You did this because you understood that we were at a crossroads in our history; that the future of our children, our grandchildren, our great-grandchildren was going to be at stake, and that we were going to have to completely rethink how we were dealing with key sectors of our economy and key aspects of our national security.

So you understood that now is the time to build a clean energy economy that will free our Nation from the grip of foreign oil and generate new green jobs in the process, jobs that pay well and can't be outsourced. You understood that now is the time to transform our education system so that every child is prepared to compete in this new global economy, that now was the time to make sure that we put new rules of the road in our financial sector to prevent the kinds of abuse and excess on Wall Street that led us to this crisis. You understood that. And you also understood that the insurance companies and the banks and the oil companies might not be crazy about some of these changes, that they were doing just fine under the status quo. So nobody thought this was going to be easy. We talked about this during the campaign.

While I'm in New York, I want to stress something about this financial reform effort. The financial industry is essential to a healthy economy and to the well being of our economy. That's why we stepped in to prevent a collapse that would have had far-reaching and devastating consequences for the American people, steps, by the way, that were not wildly popular and still aren't among the American people. But it was the right thing to do.

But we also know we should never again have to face potential calamity because of reckless speculation and deceptive practices and shortsightedness and self-interestedness from a few. So if there are members of the financial industry in the audience today, I would

ask that you join us in passing what are necessary reforms. Don't fight them, join us on them.

This is important for our country. And in the long run, it will be good for the financial industry to have a level playing field in which everybody knows the rules and everybody knows that the rules will be enforced, and people are competing not by how confusing you can make things and how you can avoid rules, but competing because you're offering innovative good products that are helping grow the American economy and putting people to work out on Main Street.

When I hear folks who had just been taking taxpayer bailout money suddenly say, "What do you want from me?"—when I hear stories about small businesses and medium-sized businesses not being able to get loans despite Wall Street being back, very profitable, that tells me that people aren't thinking about their obligations, our mutual obligations to each other, the fact that we're in this together.

So what's true for financial reform, what's true for energy reform, is also true for health insurance reform. You know why this is so important. You know if you're an employer, you've seen what's happening to the premiums that you're paying on behalf of your employees, and if you're an employee, you've how your employer is passing on some of those costs to you. Premiums have doubled over the past decade. They could double again in the next decade.

Millions of people in this country have been discriminated against because of preexisting conditions. More and more companies are dropping their coverage; more and more families struggling to pay health care even as insurance out-of-pocket costs rise year after year.

Now, here's the good news. We are closer than we have ever been to passing health insurance reform that will make quality, affordable—[*applause*]—that will make quality care affordable for people who don't have insurance, and it will bring stability and security to people who do have insurance, and that will slow the skyrocketing costs of health insurance for our families and our businesses, our State and Federal budgets.

Nothing could be more important in terms of getting our fiscal house in order than finishing the job on health reform. Now, there's still details to be ironed out, still disagreements that we've got to work out, but for the first time, we've passed bills through every committee. They are now starting to be narrowed. There are negotiations taking place. And we've got people who are engaging, even if they don't want to engage, because they're starting to realize it's not a matter of whether; it's a matter of when.

All of the bills that have been passed, despite the various differences, all of them would provide help to millions of people who don't have coverage. Right—understand, 29 million—under the Baucus bill—29 million people who don't have health insurance would now have health insurance, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

All the bills would prevent insurance companies from barring you because of preexisting conditions. All of them would set up an exchange, a framework so that businesses and self-employed individuals could buy in and leverage the fact that there are millions of people as part of a pool so that they can get a better deal.

So we are nearing the finish line. With your help, we are going to cross it. And there are going to be some fierce arguments in the days ahead. That's how it should be. That's how our democracy works. But I want all the Democrats who are in the house—[*laughter*]—to understand what a profound potential achievement this is and stay focused on the goal line. Sometimes we like to have our little intramural battles; that's fine. The American people desperately need this.

I want all non-Democrats who may be here or may be watching to know that I believe in a strong and loyal opposition. I believe in a two-party system where ideas are tested and assumptions are challenged. That's how we strengthen our proposals. That's how our democracy works. But what I reject, what I don't have a lot of sympathy for is folks who are just sitting on the sidelines and rooting for failure, whether it's on health care or energy or the economy. What I reject is when some folks

suggest that we go back to the policies that got us in the mess in the first place, as if we didn't just go through what we've been going through.

I said this before, last week at a fundraiser: I don't mind cleaning up the mess that some other folks made. That's what I signed up to do. But while I'm there mopping the floor, I don't want somebody standing there saying, "You're not mopping fast enough," or, "You're not holding the mop the right way." [*Laughter*] Grab a mop! Why don't you help clean up?

Everybody in Washington—Democrat, Republican—we all have a responsibility to rise to this occasion, to look past our differences, to recognize that we have to move beyond the failed policies and broken politics that allowed our toughest problems to go unsolved for decades.

When you look at the health care debate, and you've got a whole bunch of Republicans who are saying, "Yeah, we should do this"—except those are all retired Republicans—[*laughter*]—Bob Dole and Bill Frist and—last time I checked, they're not socialist. And they think it's important for us to get this done. That's a model for what everybody needs to be thinking. Roll up our sleeves and help to make this country the kind of country it should be.

In the end, the people I meet across this country, they aren't looking for a lot. They're not looking for government to solve all their problems. They just want a chance to succeed. They're modest hopes: They want a job; they want to be able to get an education. If they've got a good idea, they want to be able to get some financing to start a business. They want to retire with some dignity and respect. They want to be able to send their kids to college. They're asking for the opportunity to make the most of their own lives. That's it. It's the chance every American deserves. That's the American Dream. That's the promise I'm working to fulfill every day.

And at this rare moment in the history, I want you all to know that without your help, I can't do it. Like I said before, what we're trying to do is big, and it's hard. If it was easy, somebody else would have done it. And it now falls to us. And I hope that everybody here is willing to recapture that sense of excitement that comes from a big, but achievable challenge. Not the superficial excitement that comes from election day, but the excitement that comes from knowing we took on something that had to be taken on; we didn't kick the can down the road, and we didn't push it off on somebody else, but instead, we decided we were going to be the generation that puts things on better footing for those coming behind us.

That's what tonight is about. That is what our efforts are about. And if you're willing to stand with me and work with me and occasionally march with me, I'm absolutely confident we're going to get it accomplished.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:21 p.m. at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to former Sens. Robert J. Dole and William H. Frist. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 21. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in New York City
October 20, 2009

The President. Hello, New York! Thank you.. Thank you. Who're you on the phone with? Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Thank you, New York! Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you so much, everybody. Thank you. Thank you so much.

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama!

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. Thank you. Thank you, everybody. I love New York! I love New Yorkers! And now that the White Sox are out of it—[*laughter*]—if there are any Yankees fans here, I wish you guys some good luck.

I am thrilled to be here. There are some—all of you are special guests, but we've got some folks that I want to make sure to acknowledge individually. First of all, we've got some outstanding Members of Congress here, all of whom are completely supportive of the agenda that we are moving forward: Nita Lowey; Anthony Weiner; Joe Crowley; Carolyn Maloney; Steve Israel. Give them a big round of applause. I think they're over here. Thank you, guys.

I want everybody to know how much I appreciate everything you've done for me, for this country, for the candidates in this room, at a time when we need your efforts more than ever. I want to thank you for supporting our candidate for city comptroller, John Liu, who's here in the house. Our nominee for public advocate, Bill de Blasio, is here. And a great city comptroller, our candidate for mayor, my friend Billy Thompson, is in the house.

Now, many of you—both here in this room and watching via webcast—a lot of you guys were on the frontlines of our campaign. You knocked on doors, you made phone calls, you devoted your time and your energy, and you wrote those checks—[*laughter*]—even when you couldn't afford it. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Is that what you told—that's what you told your spouse, "Yes we can!" [*Laughter*]

All because you understood that we were at a special moment in our country's history. And I want you to know that not a day goes by when I don't think about those efforts of yours. And the obligation as a consequence of you giving me this great honor, the obligation that I have to every American, not just those who worked in the campaign, but every American, everybody who put their faith and hopes, their sweat and tears into a campaign that wasn't just about winning an election, but was about changing a country.

Now, it's been less than a year since the Obama family packed up—[*laughter*]—and moved to Washington. People don't—so much has happened that we tend to forget it's only been 9 months since I was sworn in, 9 months to the day. And I want to report to you that Malia and Sasha are doing fine. Michelle is a pretty good First Lady. We got Bo. He's handling his business in the White House. [*Laughter*]

But it's important for all of us to remember what the situation was when we came in 9 months ago, because there's some people out there who seem to have a selective memory. There's sort of a revisionist history about what was waiting for us when we began this Presidency. We were facing an economic crisis unlike any we had seen in generations: losing 700,000 jobs a month; financial system on the verge of meltdown; economists of every political persuasion, they were fearful that we might fall into a great depression. You remember that?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. And that's why we acted boldly and we acted swiftly to pass a Recovery Act that's made a difference in the lives of families across America. People don't, I think, remember where we were and where we are now. We put a tax cut into the pockets of small-business owners and 95 percent of working families—just like I promised during the campaign—the most progressive tax cut in history. Seven million families here in New York have benefited from it.

We extended unemployment insurance, increased unemployment insurance for 12 million Americans to help them get through tough times. That's helped millions of New Yorkers. We made COBRA 65 percent cheaper to make sure that if you were looking for a job, your family wouldn't go without health care. That was in the Recovery Act.

We gave relief to States, including New York, to help prevent more teachers and firefighters and police officers from being laid off. According to initial reports, 250,000 jobs in our schools were saved as a consequence of the Recovery Act, a quarter of a million teachers and educational specialists. We've supported more than 30,000 loans to small businesses, including

2,000 in this State alone. We've helped create thousands of private sector jobs.

But not only did we provide tax cuts, not only did we provide relief to States that needed it and individuals that were having a tough time—that's not just what this Recovery Act was about—we also happened to, in the Recovery Act, invest a greater sum in education than any time in our history and coupled that with critical reforms that had been bottlenecked in Congress for years.

The Recovery Act was the largest investment in clean energy in American history. It was the largest boost to medical research and basic research in history. It was the single largest investment in infrastructure since Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System back in the 1950s. And it's putting people back to work all across America rebuilding roads and bridges and dams.

So that was pretty good; that was the first month. [*Laughter*] But we didn't stop there. As Tim Kaine mentioned, we passed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, because I think women should get the pay the same as men for doing the same work. We lifted the ban on stem cell research and reaffirmed science to its rightful place in America. We extended health care to 11 million children in this country, including 4 million who didn't have health insurance.

We passed the Ted Kennedy service bill, expanding Peace Corps and AmeriCorps, creating service opportunities all across America. We appointed a New Yorker from the Bronx to the Supreme Court named Sonia Sotomayor. We passed legislation to protect consumers from credit card abuse. We passed a law to prevent abuse in the mortgage industry. We passed a law that will protect our children from being targeted from big tobacco companies.

For the first time in history, we've begun to put in place a new national policy aimed at both increasing fuel economy and reducing greenhouse gas pollution for all new trucks and cars sold in the United States of America.

That's in the first 9 months. The fact is, we've already had one of the most productive first years of any administration in decades. That's because of you. That's because of the work you did. That's what knocking on doors and making phone calls was all about.

And by the way, that's just what we've done at home. I've got a whole other portfolio. Abroad, we've begun a new era of engagement. We're working with our partners to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, seeking the goal of a safer, more secure world that's free of nuclear weapons. We're working in concert with nations on just about every continent to stem the economic downturn and to finally confront the challenge of climate change.

We banned torture. We committed to closing Guantanamo. We're rebuilding our military. We're reaffirming our alliances. We're getting out of Iraq. We've made progress in fighting Al Qaida in Pakistan and Somalia and Indonesia.

That's in the first 9 months. But the reason you're here tonight, the reason I'm here tonight, the reason Tim Kaine is here tonight is because our work is not done. We're just getting started, because we know that there's still far too many Americans who are out of work, too many Americans seeing their hours and their wages cut, too many Americans who still don't have health care, and if they've got health care, they're seeing their insurance companies more worried about turning a profit than maintaining coverage. They're dropping folks, discriminating against them because of preexisting conditions.

We know that we still have so much work to do on the energy front. We know that we still have so much work to do on education. We know that this country still faces enormous challenges. And that's not news to you. You didn't sign up thinking this would be easy. I mean, I just have to remind everybody, I know the campaign got fun, but those of you who were there early, you remember that? When nobody could pronounce my name?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. What is it that motivated you? It was the notion that there's this gap between what's possible in America and what we had achieved. Now, we didn't think that on election day, suddenly that gap would close, and that same energy, that same enthusiasm,

that same passion that you displayed during the campaign, that applies now more than ever because now is when the work begins. That was just the end of the beginning. We've got so much work to do.

We all remember, back in the very beginning, a lot of people said having hope was naive. Do you remember that?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. That our faith in this country was misplaced. There's a whole industry feeding cynicism and skepticism and promoting the notion of, "Well, it hasn't happened yet so it's not going to happen." And for a while, you remember, those folks looked like they were right. You remember? Until we proved them wrong; until we proved there isn't anything false about hope; until we proved that in America, nothing can withstand the power of millions of voices that are calling for change. That's the spirit that we need right now because the same folks are out there now. They say, "Lower our sights, you're doing too much. Scale back, accept less." I didn't run for President to accept mediocrity. That's not what this country is about. That's not why you got involved and got engaged. You didn't decide, "Oh, this is actually harder than we expected. The insurance companies don't like health reform; I guess we'll just pack up and go home"——

Audience members. No!

The President. ——"Oh, well, the banks, they don't want financial regulation; I guess it's just too hard. You know, that poster was nice during the campaign, we had some fun, but oh well." [*Laughter*] We didn't work so hard to leave our problems to the next generation, the next administration. We came to solve these problems, right here, right now.

Now is the time to build a clean energy economy that can put people back to work. Now is the time to educate every American child so they can compete in a global economy. Now is the time to make sure that every American has affordable health care. That's what we're fighting for. Not later, but now!

You fired up?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. I want to recognize the people in this room and the folks watching online who are helping us do exactly that. I want to thank all the Organizing for America volunteers for making calls, knocking on doors, keeping up the fight. You know why this is so important. You know premiums have doubled over the past decade. Some of you have seen it. Your employer said, "I'm sorry, I don't want to do it to you, but I'm doubling your premiums." In some cases, their—what they're paying, your employers are paying, is going up even faster than what you're paying. It's unsustainable. It could double again in the next decade. You know that millions of people in this country have been discriminated because they don't—of a preexisting condition. You know that more companies are dropping coverage. You know that more and more families are struggling to pay for health care even if they have insurance, out-of-pocket costs going up faster and faster.

And you know what Tim Kaine understood and underscored: We are closer than we've ever been. This has been a battle that has lasted since Teddy Roosevelt, the basic principle that part of our social contract is you don't go bankrupt if you get sick, that families shouldn't have to worry if their children need help, that we are looking after each other enough to make sure that everybody has health care in this country.

We're closer than we've ever been. Five committees of Congress all voted out legislation. As Tim said, the differences are starting to narrow, and we're going to, pretty soon, be hitting the floor in the House and the Senate with bills; then we're going to reconcile them. And then we're going to have to vote on them again. And then I'm going to sign it.

Now, there are still some details and some disagreements that have to be worked out.

Audience member. Single-payer!

Audience member. Public option!

The President. Let me say this, because somebody just brought up something. [*Laughter*] Among Democrats and progressives, there are a whole set of views about how we should do health care. But understand that the bill you least like in Congress right now, the one you least like of the five that are out there, would provide 29 million Americans health care, 29 million Americans who don't have it right now would get it. The bill you least like would

prevent insurance companies from barring you from getting health insurance because of pre-existing conditions. Whatever the bill you least like would set up an exchange so that people right now who are having to try to bargain for health insurance on their own are suddenly part of a pool of millions that forces insurance companies to compete for their business and give them better deals and lower rates.

So there are going to be some disagreements and details to work out. But to the Democrats, I want to say to you, Democrats, let's make sure that we keep our eye on the prize. And that is, all those millions of Americans who don't have health insurance and all those who do have health insurance that are seeing their costs go up, if we get a bill—when we get a bill that delivers on those issues——

Audience member. When!

The President. When—that's what I said. Then we have to do everything we can to support it. You know, sometimes Democrats can be their own worst enemies. Democrats are an opinionated bunch. You know, the other side, they just kind of sometimes do what they're told. [*Laughter*] Democrats, you all are thinking for yourselves. I like that in you. But it's time for us to make sure that we finish the job here. We are this close. And we've got to be unified.

And to all those non-Democrats who may be in the audience—[*laughter*]—or who are watching our webcast, or who will hear about this on cable—[*laughter*]—I want you to know, I believe in a strong and loyal opposition. I believe in a two-party system where ideas are tested and assumptions are challenged. That's made this legislation that we're working on better and more durable. That's how our democracy works. That's a good thing.

But what I reject is when some folks decide to sit on the sidelines and root for failure on health care, or they root for failure on reforming our energy system, or they root for failure on getting the Olympics. I mean, who's against the Olympics? [*Laughter*] What's up with that? [*Laughter*] You know? That's a sad thing, isn't it?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. I mean, I don't care if you're Democrat or Republican, you know, it's the Olympics. [*Laughter*] Come on!

What I reject is when some folks, all they've got to say is, "Let's go back and do the things that we were doing that got us into this mess in the first place." That's all they've got to say. Like we forgot. [*Laughter*] We didn't forget. It was only 9 months ago. [*Laughter*] We understand exactly who and what got us into this mess. Now, we don't mind cleaning it up. I'm grabbing my mop and my broom and—[*laughter*]—we're scrubbing the floors and trying to neaten things up.

But don't just stand there and say, "You're not holding the mop right." [*Laughter*] Don't just stand there and say, "You're not mopping fast enough." Don't accuse me of having a socialist mop. [*Laughter*] Instead of standing on the sidelines, why don't you grab a mop? Help us clean up this mess and get America back on track! Grab a mop!

Audience members. Grab a mop! Grab a mop! Grab a mop!

The President. That's right.

Audience members. Grab a mop! Grab a mop! Grab a mop!

The President. Hey, I don't mind cleaning it up, but you know—sheesh! [*Laughter*] Feel a little shame. Help out a little bit. All of us in Washington—Democrats, Republicans—we all have a responsibility to rise to this occasion, to look past our differences, recognize that we've got to move past the failed policies and broken politics that allowed our unresolved problems to stay unresolved for decades. I will work with anyone and everyone that's willing to do exactly that. And in their heart of hearts, even some of our opponents, they know. They know.

We had Bill Frist and Bob Dole both say we need to do a health care bill. Now, they didn't endorse some specific bill. They said, "Let's work constructively." Of course, they're retired. [*Laughter*] So they could go ahead and speak the truth. But there are times, there are moments in this country where everybody needs to speak the truth and act on the truth. That's what people are counting on right now.

Look, I understand that a lot of folks are going through tough times right now, and understandably, they're feeling impatient. Now, they wish the minute we had gotten elected that suddenly things we're going to change overnight. And I understand that because they feel a sense of urgency. And we've all got to feel that sense of urgency. But the thing is, most people, their expectations are very modest. They're not looking to government to solve all their problems. They don't want a handout. All they want is a chance to succeed; if they're willing to work, that they can find a job that pays a living wage; that they don't have to worry about being bankrupt if they get sick; that they can send their kids to college so that they can do a little better than they did; so that they can retire with some dignity and respect.

And those things are within our grasp if we all work together. People just want an opportunity to make the most of their lives, and that's the chance that every American deserves. That's the American Dream. That's a promise I'm working to fulfill every day. And that's why you're here.

This is such a rare moment in our history. Now is not the time to start getting disillusioned, or now is not the time to start thinking, "Ah, this is too hard." We've got this opportunity to change our world for the better. But the change—we said this in the campaign, it is true now—it never starts in Washington; it always starts with you. It starts with ordinary people, men and women who love their country, who are standing together and fighting for its future.

It happens when citizens reject the cynicism and the skepticism and all the pundits yakking about why we can't do that and we can't do this. It's when you fight and you organize and you advocate and you walk the streets and you hit the phones. And people slam the door in your faces and they say, "Uhh, get out of here. I'm not interested." And you keep on doing it. That's how we succeeded before. That's how we'll succeed again.

So I just want everybody here to understand, we are in this for the long haul. Some of these changes may not happen in 18 months or 36 months or 72 months. It's going to take time. But I don't know about you, I just want to let you know—just getting started. I'm not tired. I don't know about you, but I'm not tired. All these folks who are throwing stuff at us and getting all crazy and, you know, I'm just getting started. I feel refreshed. I feel energized. And it's because of you.

So if you're willing to keep on going, if you're willing to keep on marching, then I guarantee you, we are going to succeed. "Yes we can" wasn't just a motto. That's what we're all about. And we are going to pass health care; we are going to get energy done; we're going to get education done. We are going to turn this country around.

Thank you, New York. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:08 p.m. in the Hammerstein Ballroom at Manhattan Center Studios. In his remarks, he referred to John C. Liu and Bill de Blasio, members, New York City Council; Gov. Timothy M. Kaine of Virginia, in his capacity as chairman of the Democratic National Committee; and former Sens. William H. Frist and Robert J. Dole. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 21.

Remarks at Metropolitan Archives, LLC, in Landover, Maryland
October 21, 2009

Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat. Thank you so much. Thank you, Joe, for that introduction and for inviting us here to Metropolitan Archives.

I want to acknowledge a few other extraordinary guests. First of all, the Governor of the great State of Maryland, Martin O'Malley, is here; Senator Ben Cardin, who is doing an outstanding job on behalf of the State; House Majority Leader Hoyer; Representative Chris Van Hollen; Representative Donna Edwards, whose congressional district we are in; County Executive Jack Johnson; Mayor William Gardiner, the mayor of Hyattsville; and my outstanding

Secretary of the Treasury, Tim Geithner; as well as my extraordinary SBA Administrator, Karen Mills. I am so glad to have them standing behind me today.

Five years ago, this company was founded by Joe and his old fraternity brother, Doug Peters. We—I have not had a chance to ask them what they were doing in—during those frat years. [*Laughter*] But they were two friends who had known each other since middle school. And today, their families took this company from an empty warehouse to a small business that stores and delivers records for some of the largest firms in the world. And the success—the story of their success has been the story of small-business owners all across the country, men and women from big cities and from small towns who've had both a good idea and the drive to follow through on it, who've convinced family and friends to join them in taking a chance on a dream.

Now, these entrepreneurial pioneers embody that spirit of possibility and the tireless work ethic and the simple hope for something better that lies at the heart of the American ideal. And they've always formed the backbone of the American economy. They're the ones who've opened up the mom-and-pop stores and started the computer tinkering that's led to some of the biggest innovations and corporations in the world. After all, Hewlett-Packard began in a garage. Google began as a research project. McDonald's started with just one restaurant.

Over the past decade and a half, America's small businesses have created 65 percent of all new jobs in the country. And more than half of all Americans working in the private sector are either employed by a small business or own one—more than half. These companies are the engine of job growth in America, they fuel our prosperity, and that's why they have to be at the forefront of our recovery.

The problem is, our small businesses have been some of the hardest hit by this recession. From the middle of 2007 through the end of 2008, small businesses lost 2.4 million jobs. And because banks shrunk from lending in the midst of the financial crisis, it's been difficult for entrepreneurs to take out the loans they need to start a business. For those who do own a small business, it's been difficult to finance inventories and make payroll, or expand if things are going well.

And that's why we made sure the Recovery Act focused on helping small businesses expand and create jobs. In it, we temporarily reduced or eliminated fees on SBA loans, loans that give small businesses more money to reinvest in their own futures. And we guaranteed some of these loans by up to 90 percent, which has given local banks and credit unions the confidence they need to lend.

In the last 8 months, these steps have made a real difference for small businesses across America. So far, the Recovery Act has supported over 33,000 loans to small businesses that have already helped save or create nearly tens of thousands of jobs, nearly $13 billion in new lending—$13 billion. And more than 1,200 banks and credit unions that had stopped issuing SBA loans when the financial crisis hit are lending again today. And more than $4.3 billion in Federal contracts are now going to small businesses.

We're also providing tax relief to small businesses under the Recovery Act, relief that will give these businesses back over $5 billion this year. And we're giving tax cuts directly to 95 percent of working Americans, which includes the vast majority of small-business owners and their employees.

So there's no question that our Recovery Act has given a boost to every American who works at a small business, or owns one, or aspires to own one. There's no question that the steps we've taken have improved the overall climate for small business across the country.

But there's also no question that we've got a long way to go. There's still too little credit flowing to our small businesses. There's still too many entrepreneurs who can't get the loans they need to open up their doors and start hiring. There's still too many who are struggling to make payroll and to stay open. And there's still too many successful small businesses that want to expand further and hire more but just don't have the capital to do it.

Metropolitan Archives is one of these companies. Last February, Joe and Doug were able to purchase the building we're standing in with an SBA loan, an expansion that has already helped them retain 10 jobs, and one that will create 10 new ones in the months ahead. In fact, business is going so well that they're already hoping to expand again. But they need another loan to make it happen.

These are the kind of stories I hear from small-business owners all the time. And they're the kind of stories that my unbelievable Administrator for the SBA, Karen Mills, hears every single day. And that's why today we're announcing new steps to support more lending to America's small businesses, steps that will lead to more jobs, more growth, and a stronger economic recovery.

The first thing we need to do is increase the maximum size of various SBA loans. So I'm calling on Congress to increase the cap on what's called 7(a) loans to $5 million. These are the loans most frequently handed out by the Small Business Administration to help folks open their doors and buy machinery, equipment, land, and buildings. These larger loans will help more small-business owners and franchisees grow. We also need to increase the maximum size of what's called 504 loans to $5 million. These are the type of loans that Joe and Doug used to expand this business and create new jobs. And we should also increase the maximum size of microloans—these are smaller loans—that go to startups and other smaller businesses.

Today we're also taking additional steps to boost credit for small businesses through our financial stability plan. The major banks that were in critical condition a year ago need no new assistance from the Government, and so we're winding down that portion of the TARP program. But to spur lending to small businesses, it's essential that we make more credit available to the smaller banks and community financial institutions that these businesses depend on. These are the community banks who know their borrowers, who gave them their first loan, who've watched them grow from down the street, not from Wall Street. The large majority of the business loans from these smaller banks are not to major corporations, they're to entrepreneurs like Joe and Doug. And when banks like these are hit by recession and financial crisis, creditworthy small businesses lose out, and that means less expansion and fewer new jobs just when we need them most.

And that's why we must do more to give these new opportunities to smaller banks so that they have the ability to access capital, so that they can lend to small businesses in their communities. So under the new steps that we're announcing today, if these institutions put forth a plan to increase lending to small businesses, we will help them get the credit they need to do it at rates that are more affordable than the ones offered to our largest financial institutions. And we will make capital even more affordable to the community development financial institutions that focus on providing credit to America's small businesses in our hardest hit rural and underserved communities.

Finally, I've asked Tim Geithner and Karen Mills to convene a conference in the coming weeks that will bring together regulators, congressional leaders, lenders, and small businesses to determine what additional steps we can take to get credit flowing to small businesses that want to expand and create more jobs. Of all the steps we're taking to move this economy from recession to recovery, I continue to believe that the success of our small businesses will be a foundation upon which our future prosperity is built. So we will continue to do whatever we can to help these businesses grow and thrive. And I'm confident that the steps we announced today will do that for small-business owners across the country, men and women we hear from every day.

They're people like Andy Cabral. Son of Portuguese immigrants, Andy started his business on an SBA loan and now runs 10 stores across Maryland and Virginia that employ 130 people. And Andy has already seen one loan fall through the cracks because of the financial crisis, and he's hit the cap on his SBA loans. But the measure we're announcing today will help Andy and other franchisees pursue their plans to expand and create more jobs.

And these steps will make a difference for more small businesses like Pete's Apizza in

Washington, DC. I recommend it that everybody go out there. [*Laughter*] When the three owners had little more than a dream of opening up a casual pizza restaurant, they found it challenging to get financing. Ultimately, they got a loan through City First Bank, a community development bank right in Washington. Today, business is booming. And the initiative we're announcing today will help more banks provide more loans to businesses like Pete's.

And the steps we've announced will make a difference for Joe and Doug and all the folks who work here at Metropolitan Archives. In the past 5 years, you've done all that's asked of Americans who hope to pursue a dream of owning their own business: You've taken a risk on a good idea; you've worked hard for your success; you've met your responsibilities to your employees and your customers. It's time that responsibility and that success are rewarded with the opportunity to keep growing, keep hiring, keep contributing to the success of your community and of your country. That's the opportunity we're providing today, and that's the opportunity I will continue to fight for as your President in the weeks and months ahead.

So to all the small-business owners out there, I just want to close by saying this: I know that times are tough, and I can only imagine what many of you are going through, in terms of keeping things going in the midst of a very tough economic climate. But I guarantee you this: This administration is going to stand behind small businesses. You are our highest priority because we are confident that when you are succeeding, America succeeds.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:16 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Joseph A. Incarnato, president, and Douglas J.J. Peters, co-owner, Metropolitan Archives, LLC; Andy Cabral, store owner, Dunkin' Brands, Inc.; and Joel and Alicia Mahr, and Thomas Marr, co-owners, Pete's New Haven Style Apizza.

Remarks at a Campaign Rally for Governor Jon S. Corzine in Hackensack, New Jersey

October 21, 2009

The President. Hello, New Jersey. It's good to be back in the Garden State.

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. Thank you. Thank you. It's good to be here. I want to make some quick thank yous here. First of all, to the president of this outstanding university, Dr. Michael Adams; to my dear friend Caroline Kennedy; to our Lieutenant Governor candidate, State Senator Loretta Weinberg; my dear friend Frank Lautenberg, Senator from New Jersey; two outstanding Congressmen who supported me early in my race for the Presidency, Steve Rothman and John Adler, give them a big round of applause. One of the finest mayors not just in New Jersey, but in the country, Cory Booker is in the house. To all the other elected officials, to all the labor leaders and religious leaders that are in the house, and to all of you who are just—just leaders, period, I am so proud to be here on behalf of a man who is absolutely committed to fighting for New Jersey's families and New Jersey's future, your Governor, my friend, Jon Corzine.

Now, I think it's important for us to have an honest conversation here. Let's examine the facts. Let's examine the facts. Jon is running for reelection during a challenging time for New Jersey and for America. I don't have to tell you that. You've seen it in your own lives. You've seen it in your own communities. There are too many folks who are out of work and too many people who are looking for a job. There are too many hard-working families being squeezed by skyrocketing costs on the one side and shrinking wages on the other. You got men and women who've worked hard all their lives, who've done the right thing all their lives, and now they're worried they won't be able to be the kinds of husbands and wives, mothers and fathers they'd hoped to be

because of economic factors beyond their control; seniors worried about whether they can stay on retirement; young people worried about whether they're going to be able to afford a college education.

So I know these are challenging times, and Jon knows these are challenging times. I know folks are hurting. But I also know this: For the past 4 years, you've had an honorable man at the helm of this State during one of the most difficult periods in its history. You've had a leader who's put the interests of hard-working New Jersey families ahead of the special interests. You've had a leader who's fought for what matters most to the people of New Jersey. That's the kind of Jon—the kind of Governor that Jon Corzine's been, that's the kind of Governor that Jon Corzine will continue to be, and that's why New Jersey needs to give Jon Corzine another 4 years.

Let's look at the record. Let's look at the record. Let's look at the record, because I know there's a tendency for politicians to distort their opponents' records in the heat of a campaign, so let's just review some history. This is a Governor who's provided more property tax relief than any Governor in New Jersey's history. This is the first Governor in 60 years who's reduced the size of government.

But at the same time, this is also a leader who's stood up against those who want to cut what matters, like education. Jon Corzine expanded early childhood education for more than 5,000 children because he understood that pre-K isn't babysitting, it's the cornerstone of a world-class education. Under Jon's leadership, the Children's Health Insurance Program expanded by nearly 100,000 kids in this State. Think about it: Kids who didn't have care now have it. New Jersey is now a leader in clean energy. And working families can spend time with a newborn baby or a sick loved one because of paid sick leave that has been signed into law by Jon Corzine. When it comes to the issues that matter most to folks, job creation and economic growth, Jon's been a true leader, the first Governor in this country to pass a recovery plan to get this economy moving in his State.

Now, listening to Jon's opponent, you'd think that New Jersey was the only State in America that's been swept up in the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, which by the way did not start under Jon Corzine's party's watch. There seems to be some selective memory here about how we got into this fix. Listening to his opponent, you'd think New Jersey was the only State in America that's been facing layoffs. You'd think New Jersey was the only State in America where hard-working men and women are worried about their families' futures.

Audience member. You tell them!

The President. I don't need to tell you, you know the truth.

It's not just Teaneck that's been going through tough times. It's not New Jersey that's been going through tough times. Americans in every corner of this country have been going through tough times. And let's be honest, this crisis came about because of the same sorts of lax regulation and trickle-down economic theories that the other guy's party has been peddling for years. I'm telling you, these folks, they got a lot of nerve. They leave this big mess, and suddenly, they're complaining about how fast we're cleaning it up.

And I'll tell you what we don't need to do right now. We don't need politicians who are more interested in scoring points than solving problems. We don't need politicians who are offering the same answers that got us into this mess in the first place. We don't need politicians who'd rather sit on the sidelines and point fingers than offer any answers, any real solutions.

We've had enough of those kinds of politicians in Trenton and in Washington. We don't need any more. What we need are leaders that are committed to moving this country forward, moving this State forward. That's the kind of leader Jon Corzine is. That's why he deserves another 4 years.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Four more years. Now, let me say something about Jon the man, because we served together in the United States Senate, and I learned what kind of man he is. I learned about his service as a United States marine.

Audience member. Semper Fi!

The President. Semper Fi!

Gov. Corzine. Hooah!

The President. I learned about how he was born into a middle class family, how he worked his way up, how he's committed to giving every American the same opportunities he had. Jon Corzine was one of the best colleagues I had in the Senate, and he's one of the best partners I have in the White House.

Jon and I worked together to enact a Recovery Act that's making a meaningful difference for families in New Jersey and across America. I want you to understand this: Because of the Recovery Act, we've prevented the police officers and firefighters Americans rely on from being laid off across this State and across this country. We've put a middle class tax cut into the pockets of 95 percent of hard-working families; that includes 3 million hard-working New Jersey families. We increased and extended unemployment insurance for 12 million Americans to help them weather this economic storm, including 600,000 men and women in this State. We made COBRA 65 percent cheaper so if you've lost your job, you've still got your health care while you're looking for a new one. We invested more than $12,000 in scholarships for disadvantaged students right here—right here at this university—while keeping teachers in the classroom and improving schools all across this State.

And the Recovery Act didn't just include the most progressive tax cuts in American history. It didn't just include emergency relief for families that needed them or for States that were seeing their tax revenues dwindle. The Recovery Act was also the largest investment in education in American history. It was the largest investment in clean energy in American history. It was the largest investment in our Nation's infrastructure since Eisenhower built the Interway [Interstate]* Highway System back in the 1950s, rebuilding our roads and our bridges and our crumbling infrastructure. That's what we've been fighting for, cleaning up the mess we found.

The reason I'm here today, the reason Jon Corzine is here today, the reason you are here today, is because you know our work is far from over. You know we still have big challenges ahead in New Jersey and across America. We are not going to rest until we solve them. We're not going to rest until anyone who's looking for a job can find a job and a job that pays a living wage. We're not going to rest until our markets are—not just our markets are rising again, but our businesses are hiring again. We're not going to rest until the American Dream is within reach of anybody who's willing to believe in it and work for it and fight for it.

And overcoming enormous challenges is not going to be easy. It's not going to happen overnight. But here's what I can say with absolute certainty. The difficult work of building a better future, it has begun. It's beginning right here in New Jersey. It's begun in Washington. It's begun across America. We've begun to build a clean energy economy that is going to free our Nation from the grips of foreign oil and generate green jobs in the process, putting people back to work in jobs that can't be outsourced. We've begun to put better standards into our schools, make college and advanced training more affordable, and prepare every child in America to succeed in the 21st-century economy.

We've begun the work of reforming America's health care system. You know why it—why that's so important. Premiums have risen almost 90 percent here in New Jersey over the last decade, and that pace is only going to continue if we fail to act.

Audience member. We love you, Obama!

The President. We know—I love you back, but I'm making an important point right now. We know—so listen up—we know that millions of people in this country have been denied coverage because of a preexisting condition. We know that more and more companies are dropping coverage. We know more and more families are having to do without insurance, or they're struggling to pay out-of-pocket costs.

Now, Jon Corzine has begun to move New Jersey past this status quo, expanding coverage

* White House correction.

for nearly 150,000 people last year. And we're close to moving America past the status quo, closer to passing serious health insurance reform than at any time in our generation, giving coverage to people who don't have it, giving stability to people who do have it, controlling skyrocketing health care costs that are crushing our families and our businesses and our State and Federal budgets.

So that's what we're fighting for: quality, affordable insurance; a world-class education; a stronger economy that doesn't just work for some folks, but everybody. That's what matters to Jon Corzine. That's what he's fighting for as Governor. That's what he'll continue fighting for if the people of New Jersey give him that chance.

So let me just be clear. I know there are folks here who may be cynical about politics. Certainly, there are folks watching who might be cynical about politics. I know that folks are skeptical about whether their elected leaders can or will do anything about the problems they face. And you've got a right to be cynical. Year after year, decade after decade, you've seen progress stymied, partisan gridlock, whether it's in your State capitals or your Nation's Capital.

But here's the thing: New Jersey now has a Governor who is bucking that trend, who's refusing to go along with business as usual. He's telling the truth about the challenges you face, and he's making every effort to meet them. And I'm here today to urge you to cast aside the cynics and the skeptics and prove to all Americans that leaders who do what's right and who do what's hard will be rewarded and not rejected.

That's what so much of this campaign comes down to. It's a matter of trust. You know, I have traveled all across the country, and I've traveled all across New Jersey, and everywhere I go, people's expectations are pretty modest. They don't want government to solve all their problems. They know they've got to work hard. They've got to meet their responsibilities, their commitments. All they're looking for is a shot. They just want an opportunity. They just want to be able to find a job that pays a living wage. They want to be able to send their kids to college so they can have a better life than they did. They want to make sure they're not bankrupt when they get sick. They want to be able to retire with some dignity and some respect.

And the thing is, what they want from their political leaders, I think—this is I hope what you want—is not somebody who's slick, is not somebody who, you know, always look well groomed. I mean, Jon's hair—[*laughter*]—kind of goes frizzy sometimes, and, you know, his beard gets a little, you know, straggly sometimes. It's not somebody who's going to pretend that everything is okay, is going to spend all his time blaming other people.

I hope what you want is somebody who's going to be straight with you, somebody who's got your interests at heart, and who's going to be out there every single day working for you because he cares about public service and he understands that if it hadn't been for some folks fighting for him, nobody—he would have never gotten to where he got to. Right?

So I want everybody who's watching to understand, Jon Corzine is a serious man, and he is serious about solving the problems of New Jersey. And we are coming down to the home stretch in this election. There's not a lot of time left. And in the days ahead, Jon is going to be talking to a lot of voters. He's going to be making a lot of speeches. He's going to be visiting a lot of towns and cities. But ultimately, the outcome of this race is not up to Jon, it's up to you. It's up to you. It's up to everybody who cares about this State, everybody who wants to build a better life for themselves and for their children.

And we are at one of those rare moments in history where we've been given the opportunity to change our country for the better. But it's never easy, and it never starts in Washington. It starts with you. When you elected me as President, just remember, nobody gave me a chance. We never promised it was going to be easy. But the excitement and the hope and the energy, that came out of your belief that that gap between what is and what's possible, that gap can be closed if everybody pulls together, if everybody's serious, if everybody is committed. We need that same kind of energy, excitement, commitment around this campaign.

And if you do that, if you do that, I guarantee you're going to have Jon Corzine as Governor. And so I'm going to close with a story that some

of you may have heard. I'm going to close with a story that some of you may have heard, because I want you to go out there and start knocking on some doors and making some phone calls.

I heard somebody out here saying, "Fired up." I don't know if you guys remember where that story "fired up" comes from. Jon Corzine remembers. But I love this story, so I like telling it. It started very early in my campaign, when you guys couldn't pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] No, you couldn't. [*Laughter*] You said, "Who? He's running for what?"

So back early in that campaign, I went down to South Carolina, an early State. And I went to a legislative dinner; I had been invited to speak. It was very early, and I needed some endorsements, so I'm sitting next to this State legislator. And I said, "Ma'am, I'd like you to endorse my candidacy for President." She looked at me, she said, "Obama, I will give you my endorsement if you come to my hometown of Greenwood, South Carolina." And I must have had a glass of wine because right away I just said, "Okay, you got a deal." [*Laughter*]

Come to find out, Greenwood is an hour and a half from every place else. [*Laughter*] So about a month later, I come in, I arrive about midnight. I'm exhausted. I've been campaigning in Iowa, New Hampshire, nonstop, haven't seen my family, I'm feeling grumpy. I get to the hotel; I want to hit the bed.

Suddenly, I get a tap on the shoulder. It's my staff person saying, "Senator"—I was Senator back then—"Senator, we need you in the car at 6:30 tomorrow morning." I said, "What?" [*Laughter*] Six-thirty. I said, "Why?" Said, "Because you got to go to Greenwood like you promised."

So the next morning I wake up, and I feel terrible. I'm exhausted. And I go to the window, I open it up, it's pouring down rain outside. I go get some coffee, I open up the newspaper, there's a bad story about me in the New York Times. Jon, you know what that's like. [*Laughter*]

I go downstairs, my umbrella blows open, I get poured on. I'm soaked. So by the time we're driving, I'm soaked, I'm tired, I'm sleepy, I'm mad, and we're driving and driving, and it takes forever. Finally, we get to Greenwood, an hour and a half later, although you don't know you're in Greenwood right away because not a lot of buildings there. [*Laughter*] We pull alongside the little park, a little field house. We go inside. Lo and behold, there are only 20 people there—[*laughter*]—20 people.

So I'm a professional, I've got a job to do. I shake hands with everybody. "How do you do? What do you do? Nice to meet you." And suddenly, out of the blue I hear this person shout out, "Fired up?" And everybody in the room acts like this is normal. [*Laughter*] They say, "Fired up!" Then I hear, "Ready to go?" And everybody in the room suddenly says, "Ready to go!"

I don't know what's going on. I look back, there's a little lady, little woman. She can't be more than 5′2″, 5′3″, about middle-aged. She's dressed like she just came from church, got a big church hat. [*Laughter*] And she smiles at me, and she points at me, and she says, "Fired up?" [*Laughter*] Turns out, this woman is a city councilwoman from Greenwood who is famous for her chant. She also, by the way, I find out later, moonlights as a private detective. [*Laughter*] This is a true story.

But wherever she goes, she always likes to chant. And so for the next, it seemed like, 5 minutes, she would just say, "Fired up?" And everybody saying, "Fired up!" And, "Ready to go?" "Ready to go!" And I realized very quickly I'm being upstaged by this person. [*Laughter*] It's irritating me a little bit. [*Laughter*] I'm looking at my staff, they're shrugging their shoulders, they don't know.

But here's the thing, New Jersey, after about a minute, I suddenly start feeling like I'm fired up. I feel like I'm kind of ready to go. So I start joining in the chant. And for the rest of the day, whenever I'd see my staff, I'd say, "Are you fired up?" They'd say, "I'm fired up." "You ready to go?" "I'm ready to go, boss." And this becomes the mantra of our campaign, everywhere we go.

Audience member. Fired up!

The President. Fired up!

Here's the moral of the story. One voice can change a room. And if one voice can change a

room, it can change a city. And if it can change a city, it can change a State. If it can change a State, it can change a nation. Change a nation, it can change the world. It can change in New Jersey, right here. Your voice can change this election. Don't give up. Don't lose heart. Don't get impatient. Support the guy who's fighting for you. Your voice can change the world. Your voice can elect Jon Corzine Governor once again of New Jersey. I need you. Jon needs you. Getting health care done depends on you. Getting energy done depends on you. Improving our schools depends on you.

So I've just got one question for you: Are you fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Are you ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. Are you fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Are you ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. Are you fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Are you ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. Let's get Jon Corzine reelected. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:17 p.m. at Fairleigh Dickinson University. In his remarks, he referred to J. Michael Adams, president, Fairleigh Dickinson University; Caroline B. Kennedy, author and daughter of former President John F. Kennedy; Mayor Cory A. Booker of Newark, NJ; New Jersey gubernatorial candidate Christopher J. Christie; South Carolina State Rep. J. Anne Parks; and Edith Childs, city council member, Greenwood, SC.

Remarks on Signing the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009

October 22, 2009

Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat. Good afternoon. Before we begin, I'd actually like to say a few words about something that is of interest to the broader public. Obviously, how we treat our veterans is hugely important, but I just want to make a quick comment about the decision made public today by Ken Feinberg on executive compensation.

I've always believed that our system of free enterprise works best when it rewards hard work. This is America. We don't disparage wealth; we don't begrudge anybody for doing well. We believe in success. But it does offend our values when executives of big financial firms, firms that are struggling, pay themselves huge bonuses, even as they continue to rely on taxpayer assistance to stay afloat.

And that's why last summer, we gave Ken Feinberg and his team the task of making an independent judgment on the executive pay packages for firms that received extraordinary assistance from the Federal Government. He was faced with the difficult task of striking the proper balance between standing up for taxpayers and returning a measure of stability to our financial system. Now, under these competing interests, I believe he's taken an important step forward today in curbing the influence of executive compensation on Wall Street while still allowing these companies to succeed and prosper.

But more work needs to be done, which is why I urge the Senate to pass legislation that will give company shareholders a voice on the pay packages awarded to their executives. And I urge Congress to continue moving forward on financial reform that will help prevent the crisis we saw last fall from happening again.

Now, in just a few days—a few weeks, we will be observing Veterans Day. We'll pause again to pay tribute to all those who have worn America's uniform. We reflect on their sacrifices and those of their families, citizens who've done their duty and who have fulfilled their responsibilities to their Nation. As a nation, we'll pledge to fulfill our responsibilities to our veterans, because our commitment to our veterans is a

sacred trust, and upholding that trust is a moral obligation.

On that day, on Veterans Day, after all the parades and all the solemn ceremonies, a lot of veterans may ask: Does America really mean it? Will America keep its promise, not simply with words, but with deeds?

And since taking office, my administration has worked hard with many of you to make sure that America fulfills our obligations to our veterans and their families. With Secretary Ric Shinseki in the lead, we're building a 21st-century VA. We're harnessing technologies to cut the redtape and backlogs. We're investing in mobile clinics to reach rural areas. We're moving towards a single lifetime electronic health record for everyone in uniform. We're making it a top priority to end homelessness among our veterans.

We dramatically increased funding for veterans health care: more care for women's veterans; for our wounded warriors from Iraq and Afghanistan suffering from Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and traumatic brain injuries. For 500,000 Priority 8 veterans, we're restoring VA health care coverage.

All told, we have made the biggest commitment to veterans—the largest percentage increase in the VA budget in more than 30 years. And this includes funding the post-9/11 GI bill, making sure it works as intended so our newest veterans and their families have the chance to pursue their education and live out their dreams.

So we're keeping our promises. We're making real progress for our vets, like those with us today, including Maryland Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown, the highest ranking elected official in the Nation who has served a tour of duty in Iraq. Thank you, Colonel Brown.

But we're here today because a problem that's gone on for far too long: the delays and uncertainty that often plague funding for veterans' health care. Over the past two decades, the VA budget has been late almost every year, often by months.

At this very moment, the VA is operating without a budget, making it harder for VA medical centers and clinics to deliver the care our vets need. The hard-working folks at the VA know this. I was there at headquarters this spring. Michelle was there—if I'm not mistaken, Ric—just this Tuesday. It's frustrating for them, and it's frustrating for our vets who pay the price when budgets are delayed: the new doctors, nurses, and critical staff that aren't hired; the new medical equipment that isn't purchased; the construction of new facilities and clinics that isn't started; the new programs for medical care that are delayed. This is inexcusable; it's unacceptable. It's time for it to stop. And that's just what we'll do with this landmark legislation, the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act.

I want everybody to know today is a victory for all the veterans' organizations who are represented on this stage who fought for years for reform. They deserve a huge congratulations. Today is a tribute to those who led the fight in Congress: Senator, and World War II vet, Danny Akaka and Representative Bob Filner. Thank you for your leadership.

All the leaders who made this possible, starting with Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who made this commitment to veterans' organizations when she became minority leader. And I was just told—[*applause*]—I was told some people didn't believe Nancy when she made that promise. [*Laughter*] Nancy keeps her promises, and I want all our vets to remember that. Senator Tim Johnson—for his great work in the Senate; somebody who has been fighting for veterans since he entered into Congress and is just tireless on this issue, Chet Edwards, please give Chet a big round of applause. Thank you, Chet. The other Members of Congress who worked so hard: Michael Michaud; Phil Hare—Phil is right here; Harry Brown—Harry Brown did great work on this; and so many others. This is a reminder of what's possible when we come together, Democrats and Republicans, to do right by our veterans.

And let me say that I take special pride in this legislation because as a Senator, I was a proud cosponsor of this legislation. I served on the Veterans Affairs Committee. In the campaign last year, you all remember, I made a promise to pass it. And today as President, I'm

fulfilling that promise, and I'm going to sign it into law.

And with this legislation, we're fundamentally reforming how we fund health care for our veterans. With advance appropriations, veterans' medical care will be funded a year in advance. For the VA, this means timely, sufficient, and predictable funding from year to year. For VA hospitals and clinics, it means more time to budget, to recruit high-quality professionals, and to invest in new health care equipment. And most of all, for our veterans, it will mean better access to doctors and nurses and the medical care that they need: specialized care for our wounded warriors with posttraumatic stress and traumatic brain injuries; and the staffing to welcome back to the VA those half-million Priority 8 vets.

In short, this is commonsense reform. It promotes accountability at the VA. It ensures oversight by Congress. It is fiscally responsible by not adding a dime to the deficit. And it ensures that veterans' health care will no longer be held hostage to the annual budget battles in Washington.

Of course, as we all know, keeping faith with our veterans is work that is never truly done. Today's veterans expect and deserve the highest quality care—as will tomorrow's veterans—especially our men and women serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. And should they ask this Veterans Day, will America back up its words with deeds, because of everyone in this room, because of this reform legislation, the answer will be, yes, the United States of America will keep our promise to our veterans. We will fulfill our responsibilities. We will uphold our obligations to all who serve. And that's why I am thrilled to be signing this legislation into law right now.

Thank you very much. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:27 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Special Master for TARP Executive Compensation Kenneth R. Feinberg; and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. H.R. 1016, approved October 22, was assigned Public Law No. 111–81.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Legislation To Create the Consumer Financial Protection Agency
October 22, 2009

I congratulate the House Financial Services Committee and Chairman Barney Frank on passing a bill out of committee to establish the consumer financial protection agency. The consumer financial protection agency will prevent predatory lending practices and other abuses and will ensure that consumers get clear information they can understand about financial products like credit cards and mortgages.

This bill has now passed a major hurdle, and this step sends an important signal to the American people that we will not stand by and allow big financial firms and their lobbyists to mobilize against change.

They are doing what they always do: descending on Congress, using every bit of influence they have to maintain the status quo that has maximized their profits at the expense of American consumers, despite the fact that recently those same American consumers bailed them out as a consequence of the bad decisions that they made.

We will continue to work closely with Congress to create, for the first time, a Federal agency whose sole mission is to protect the financial interests of everyday Americans with clear rules of the road for financial products and sufficient authority and resources to enforce those rules across the entire market.

The creation of the agency is part of a broader regulatory reform effort that we are working on with Congress to bring a new sense of responsibility and accountability to our financial system.

Videotaped Remarks to the Israeli Presidential Conference: Facing Tomorrow 2009

October 21, 2009

President Peres, Prime Minister Netanyahu, honored guests: I'm happy to send my warmest wishes to all of you who have gathered for this important conference on Facing Tomorrow. I'm sorry that I could not be there with you in person, but I'm so pleased that our extraordinary Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, will be participating with all of you.

I'm especially honored to send my greetings to a great statesman, the host of this conference, President Shimon Peres. His life stands as an extraordinary example of how courage and perseverance can help shape the future and turn harrowing challenges into historic opportunities. In his lifetime, he has helped to build and secure the State of Israel, he has faced grave threats and forged peace, and he has always challenged us to seek the promise of a better day.

Shimon has also contributed to the deep and much abiding friendship between the United States and Israel, a bond that is much more than a strategic alliance. The American people and the Israeli people share a faith in the future, a belief that democracies can shape their own destiny, and that opportunity should be available to all.

Through its own extraordinary history, Israel has given life to that promise. We see it in Israel's thriving democracy. We see it in the courage of citizens who go about their lives, even when faced with grave danger. We see it in the prosperity that has been forged and the innovation that has spread benefits well beyond Israel's borders, and we were reminded of that recently when Ada Yonath was chosen as the Nobel Laureate for Chemistry.

But we also see it in the optimism that has brought you together. Our moment in history is filled with challenges that test our will and invite pessimism, from a global economic crisis to a growing danger from climate change, from the spread of nuclear weapons to the obstacles that stand in the way of a secure and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Faced with these burdens, we can choose to defer action, to sustain a dangerous status quo, or we can meet the challenges of our time head on.

Like you, I believe that now's the time to act. By drawing upon such a wide range of expertise within Israel, President Peres is harnessing the talent and dynamism of the Israeli people in facing the future. And by bringing together such a broad and remarkable group of leaders from around the world, he is underscoring a fundamental truth: We cannot meet the tests of our time unless we meet them together. All of us must accept our share of responsibility for progress.

As we look to the future, consider what can be achieved if we move beyond our differences; if a secure Israel and an independent Palestine are at peace and Arab States commit to genuine reconciliation; if new partnerships were forged across the region to advance health and education, clean energy and innovation; if we overcome the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction; and if global cooperation were founded upon the basis of mutual interests and mutual respect, and we met our responsibility to leave our children a world that is more peaceful and prosperous.

It is easy to grow disheartened. But together, we must keep our eyes fixed on the future that we want to build. History shows us what is possible. Israel's story tells us that impossible odds can be overcome. And Shimon's leadership reminds us that dark moments cannot conceal a path to progress.

I wish you all a productive and successful conference.

NOTE: The President's remarks were videotaped at 4:55 p.m. on October 19 in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast to the conference in Jerusalem, Israel. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 23.

Remarks at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts

October 23, 2009

Thank you very much. Please, have a seat. Thank you. Thank you, MIT. I am hugely honored to be here. It's always been a dream of mine to visit the most prestigious school in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Oh, hold on a second—certainly the most prestigious school in this part of Cambridge, Massachusetts. [*Laughter*] And I'll probably be here for a while. I understand a bunch of engineering students put my motorcade on top of Building 10. [*Laughter*] Here—this tells you something about MIT: Everybody hands out periodic tables. [*Laughter*] What's up with that? [*Laughter*]

I want to thank all of you today for the warm welcome and for the work that all of you are doing to generate and test new ideas that hold so much promise for our economy and for our lives. And in particular, I want to thank two outstanding MIT professors, Eric Lander, a person you just heard from, Ernie Moniz, for their service on my Council of Advisers on Science and Technology. And they have been hugely helpful to us already on looking at, for example, how the Federal Government can most effectively respond to the threat of the H1N1 virus. And so I'm very grateful to them.

We've got some other special guests here I just want to acknowledge very briefly. First of all, my great friend and a champion of science and technology here in the great Commonwealth of Massachusetts, my friend Deval Patrick is here. Our Lieutenant Governor, Tim Murray, is here. Attorney General Martha Coakley is here. Auditor of the Commonwealth Joe DeNucci is here. The mayor of the great city of Cambridge, Denise Simmons, is in the house. The mayor of Boston, Tom Menino, is not here, but he met me at the airport, and he is doing great. [*Laughter*] He sends best wishes.

Somebody who really has been an all-star in Capitol Hill over the last 20 years, but certainly over the last year, on a whole range of issues, everything from Afghanistan to clean energy, a great friend, John Kerry. Please give John Kerry a round of applause. And a wonderful Member of Congress—I believe this is your district, is that correct, Mike?—Mike Capuano, please give Mike a big round of applause.

Now, Dr. Moniz is also the director of MIT's Energy Initiative, called MITEI. And he and President Hockfield just showed me some of the extraordinary energy research being conducted at this institute: Windows that generate electricity by directing light to solar cells; lightweight, high-power batteries that aren't built, but are grown—that was neat stuff—[*laughter*—engineering viruses to create batteries; more efficient lighting systems that rely on nanotechnology; innovative engineering that will make it possible for offshore wind power plants to deliver electricity even when the air is still.

And it's a reminder that all of you are heirs to a legacy of innovation—not just here but across America—that has improved our health and our well being and helped us achieve unparalleled prosperity. I was telling John and Deval on the ride over here, you just get excited being here and seeing these extraordinary young people and the extraordinary leadership of Professor Hockfield, because it taps into something essential about America. It's the legacy of daring men and women who put their talents and their efforts into the pursuit of discovery, and it's the legacy of a nation that supported those intrepid few willing to take risks on an idea that might fail, but might also change the world.

Even in the darkest of times that this Nation has seen, it has always sought a brighter horizon. Think about it. In the middle of the Civil War, President Lincoln designated a system of land-grant colleges, including MIT, which helped open the doors of higher education to millions of people. A year—a full year before the end of World War II, President Roosevelt signed the GI bill, which helped unleash a wave of strong and broadly shared economic growth. And after the Soviet launch of Sputnik, the first artificial satellite to orbit the Earth, the United States went about winning the space race by investing in science and technology, leading not only to small steps on the Moon but also to tremendous economic benefits here on Earth.

So the truth is, we have always been about innovation, we have always been about discovery. That's in our DNA. The truth is, we also face more complex challenges than generations past: A medical system that holds the promise of unlocking new cures is attached to a health care system that has the potential to bankrupt families and businesses and our Government; a global marketplace that links the trader on Wall Street to the homeowner on Main Street to the factory worker in China, an economy in which we all share opportunity is also an economy in which we all share crisis. We face threats to our security that seek—there are threats to our security that are based on those who would seek to exploit the very interconnectedness and openness that's so essential to our prosperity. The system of energy that powers our economy also undermines our security and endangers our planet.

Now, while the challenges today are different, we have to draw on the same spirit of innovation that's always been central to our success. And that's especially true when it comes to energy. There may be plenty of room for debate as to how we transition from fossil fuels to renewable fuels. We all understand there's no silver bullet to do it. There's going to be a lot of debate about how we move from an economy that's importing oil to one that's exporting clean energy technology, how we harness the innovative potential on display here at MIT to create millions of new jobs, and how we will lead the world to prevent the worst consequences of climate change. There are going to be all sorts of debates, both in the laboratory and on Capitol Hill, but there's no question that we must do all these things.

Countries on every corner of this Earth now recognize that energy supplies are growing scarcer, energy demands are growing larger, and rising energy use imperils the planet we will leave to future generations. And that's why the world is now engaged in a peaceful competition to determine the technologies that will power the 21st century. From China to India, from Japan to Germany, nations everywhere are racing to develop new ways to produce and use energy. The nation that wins this competition will be the nation that leads the global economy. I am convinced of that. And I want America to be that nation. It's that simple.

Now, that's why the Recovery Act that we passed back in January makes the largest investment in clean energy in history, not just to help end this recession, but to lay a new foundation for lasting prosperity. The Recovery Act includes $80 billion to put tens of thousands of Americans to work developing new battery technologies for hybrid vehicles, modernizing the electric grid, making our homes and businesses more energy efficient, doubling our capacity to generate renewable electricity. These are creating private sector jobs weatherizing homes, manufacturing cars and trucks, upgrading to smart electric meters, installing solar panels, assembling wind turbines, building new facilities and factories and laboratories all across America, and, by the way, helping to finance extraordinary research.

In fact, in just a few weeks, right here in Boston, workers will break ground on a new Wind Technology Testing Center, a project made possible through a $25 million Recovery Act investment as well as through the support of Massachusetts and its partners. And I want everybody to understand, Governor Patrick's leadership and vision made this happen. He was bragging about Massachusetts on the way over here. I told him, "You don't have to be a booster, I already love the State." But he helped make this happen.

Hundreds of people will be put to work building this new testing facility, but the benefits will extend far beyond these jobs. For the first time, researchers in the United States will be able to test the world's newest and largest wind turbine blades, blades roughly the length of a football field, and that in turn will make it possible for American businesses to develop more efficient and effective turbines and to lead a market estimated at more than $2 trillion over the next two decades.

This grant follows other Recovery Act investments right here in Massachusetts that will help create clean energy jobs in this Commonwealth and across the country. And this only builds on the work of your Governor, who has endeavored to make Massachusetts a clean energy leader, from increasing the supply of

renewable electricity to quadrupling solar capacity to tripling the Commonwealth's investment in energy efficiency, all of which helps to draw new jobs and new industries. Now, even—[*applause*]—that's worth applause.

Now, even as we're investing in technologies that exist today, we're also investing in the science that will produce the technologies of tomorrow. The Recovery Act provides the largest single boost in scientific research in history. Let me repeat that. The Recovery Act, the stimulus bill, represents the largest single boost in scientific research in history. An increase—[*applause*]—that's an increase in funding that's already making a difference right here on this campus. And my budget also makes the research and experimentation tax credit permanent, a tax credit that spurs innovation and jobs, adding $2 to the economy for every dollar that it costs.

And all of this must culminate in the passage of comprehensive legislation that will finally make renewable energy the profitable kind of energy in America. John Kerry is working on this legislation right now, and he's doing a terrific job reaching out across the other side of the aisle, because this should not be a partisan issue. Everybody in America should have a stake in legislation that can transform our energy system into one that's far more efficient, far cleaner, and provides energy independence for America, making the best use of resources we have in abundance, everything from figuring out how to use the fossil fuels that inevitably we are going to be using for several decades—things like coal and oil and natural gas—figuring out how we use those as cleanly and efficiently as possible, creating safe nuclear power, sustainable—sustainably grown biofuels, and then the energy that we can harness from the wind and the waves and the Sun. It is a transformation that will be made as swiftly and as carefully as possible to ensure that we are doing what it takes to grow this economy in the short, medium, and long term. And I do believe that a consensus is growing to achieve exactly that.

The Pentagon has declared our dependence on fossil fuels a security threat. Veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan are traveling the country as part of Operation Free, campaigning to end our dependence on oil. We have a few of these folks here today, right there. The young people of this country that I've met all across America, they understand that this is the challenge of their generations.

Leaders in the business community are standing with leaders in the environmental community to protect the economy and the planet we leave for our children. The House of Representatives has already passed historic legislation, due in large part to the efforts of Massachusetts's own Ed Markey. [*Applause*] He deserves a big round of applause. We're now seeing prominent Republicans like Senator Lindsey Graham joining forces with long-time leaders like John Kerry on this issue to swiftly pass a bill through the Senate as well. In fact, the Energy Committee, thanks to the work of its chair, Senator Jeff Bingaman, has already passed key provisions of comprehensive legislation.

So we are seeing a convergence. The naysayers, the folks who would pretend that this is not an issue, they are being marginalized. But I think it's important to understand that the closer we get, the harder the opposition will fight and the more we'll hear from those whose interest or ideology run counter to the much-needed action that we're engaged in. There are those who will suggest that moving toward clean energy will destroy our economy, when it's the system we currently have that endangers our prosperity and prevents us from creating millions of new jobs. There are going to be those who cynically claim—make cynical claims that contradict the overwhelming scientific evidence when it comes to climate change, claims whose only purpose is to defeat or delay the change that we know is necessary.

So we're going to have to work on those folks. But understand, there's also another myth that we have to dispel, and this one is far more dangerous because we're all somewhat complicit in it. It's far more dangerous than any attack made by those who wish to stand in the way of progress, and that's the idea that there is nothing or little that we can do. It's pessimism. It's the pessimistic notion that our politics are too broken and our people too unwilling to make hard

choices for us to actually deal with this energy issue that we're facing. And implicit in this argument is the sense that somehow we've lost something important: that fighting American spirit; that willingness to tackle hard challenges; that determination to see those challenges to the end; that we can solve problems; that we can act collectively—that somehow that is something of the past.

I reject that argument. I reject it because of what I've seen here at MIT, because of what I have seen across America, because of what we know we are capable of achieving when called upon to achieve it. This is the nation that harnessed electricity and the energy contained in the atom, that developed the steamboat and the modern solar cell. This is the nation that pushed westward and looked skyward. We have always sought out new frontiers, and this generation is no different.

Today's frontiers can't be found on a map. They're being explored in our classrooms and our laboratories, in our startups and our factories. And today's pioneers are not traveling to some far flung place. These pioneers are all around us—the entrepreneurs and the inventors, the researchers, the engineers—helping to lead us into the future, just as they have in the past. This is the nation that has led the world for two centuries in the pursuit of discovery. This is the nation that will lead the clean energy economy of tomorrow, so long as all of us remember what we have achieved in the past and we use that to inspire us to achieve even more in the future.

I am confident that's what's happening right here at this extraordinary institution. And if you will join us in what is sure to be a difficult fight in the months and years ahead, I am confident that all of America is going to be pulling in one direction to make sure that we are the energy leader that we need to be.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:44 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Ernest J. Moniz, director, Energy Initiative, Eric S. Lander, professor of biology, and Susan Hockfield, president, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and Gov. Deval L. Patrick of Massachusetts.

Remarks at a Reception for Governor Deval L. Patrick in Boston, Massachusetts

October 23, 2009

The President. Hello, everybody!

Audience members. Hello!

The President. Well, you hear a lot of politicians saying they're going to be quick—[*laughter*]—and then they go on and on. They say, "one last thing," "in conclusion." Deval is a man of his word. [*Laughter*] He says he's going to be quick, and he's quick. [*Laughter*]

I am so thrilled to be here today with the Governor and Lieutenant Governor. And at the outset, I just want to say—tell people a little story. I may have mentioned this to some other people before. I had just been elected to the United States Senate, and when I first started running for the U.S. Senate, not a lot of people knew me, and let's face it, none of you could pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] When I came to Boston to speak at the convention, everybody said "Huh?" You know, "Why him?" and all those questions.

But I will tell you, Deval Patrick knew my name; in fact, he had supported me, one of my earliest supporters outside of Illinois during that race. We had become friends because of some associations that he had with the Justice Department, and we had had a chance to meet. And I immediately thought, this is just a class act, and the fact that he had some Chicago roots and had worked himself up from, you know, from tough circumstances to achieve the extraordinary things that he achieved, I think, made him that much more appealing to me.

Anyway, I win the race, and I'm in Washington; I've just gotten my office set up, and suddenly, Deval says, "Listen, I want to come

down and just talk to you about some things." He comes down, and he says, "I've decided to run for Governor." And I'm thinking to myself, now, he took a chance on me when I didn't have a chance, and frankly, I don't think he has a chance. [*Laughter*] But what could I do? [*Laughter*] I mean, he had already, you know, put himself out there in one hopeless cause, and the least I could do was reciprocate. [*Laughter*]

The truth is, though, actually, the minute he started getting organized, I said to myself, he is going to win. And the reason was that there's a core integrity about Deval, a sense that he wants to do the right thing and he is going to be tenacious in pursuit of the right thing, that he's going to speak truth to power, that he's not going to back down, that besides being extraordinarily gracious and just a good man, he's somebody who has a vision for the future that can excite people.

And so I slowly watched here in Massachusetts as this incredible grassroots movement began to build and people from all walks of life and all corners of the Commonwealth started to converge and say, you know, we thought he was Irish—"Patrick"—[*laughter*]—he's not, but we like him anyway. [*Laughter*]

And now what you've seen, in addition to a extraordinary campaigner and an extraordinary campaign culminating in victory, are the fruits of that labor. The fact of the matter is, is that since Deval took office, he has performed extraordinary things under extraordinarily difficult circumstances. There's not a tougher time to be Governor than right now. And yet without losing his cool, without losing that steady inner calm that he has, Deval has gone about the business pushing through historic ethics reforms here in Massachusetts. Working with his terrific Lieutenant Governor, he's made sure that education isn't shortchanged, that this Commonwealth ends up being a leader in clean energy and biotech and all the innovative areas that are ultimately going to determine how well we're able to compete around the world. And as a consequence, there really should be no doubt that this guy gets a second term. There really should be no doubt that this guy gets a second term.

But having said that, let's be honest, this is going to be a tough race. Reelection is not a foregone conclusion, because times are tough, and Deval is the first one to acknowledge that there are a lot of people hurting out there. And although he and I are partners in making sure that we are continuing to fund basic research and we're continuing to fund education and we are implementing health care reform in a way that works for ordinary families, the fact of the matter is, is that when people look at a high unemployment rate and they look at tough budget decisions that have to be made, the argument that, "Well, things would be a lot worse if it weren't for Deval," and "Things are going to be a lot better as a consequence of Deval," that argument is a tough one to make.

It's a lot easier to be irresponsible. It's a lot easier to push off tough decisions. It's a lot easier to just say, let's just manage the status quo as best we can and spend a lot of time pointing fingers and blaming others for why we're not getting things done.

And so the question, I guess, that I'm going to have for all of you—and I'm going to have a chance to speak to the larger group, so I'm not going to make this a long speech—but to these folks here who are some of the core supporters, early investors in Deval's vision, the question I have for you is, were you in this just for the glamour and the excitement? [*Laughter*] Were you along for the ride just when it was easy? Or did you really believe in what Deval was talking about? Did you really believe that, you know, there was a gap between what could be accomplished in this State and the status quo and an understanding that it was going to take an enormous amount of effort and there were going to be a lot of ups and downs in order to close that gap?

If you really believed, if you understood fully the scope of Deval's vision, what he was talking about in terms of moving Massachusetts forward, then this should be an energizing moment. This should be a time where you are really feeling good, because you are ready then to enter into battle on behalf of that vision. It's going to take a lot of work. We're going to have to make sure that the same kind of excitement, the same kind of energy that was displayed the first

time around is replicated on behalf of governance. And campaigning before you govern is always easy because everybody projects onto you whatever it is that they think should happen. [*Laughter*] Governance, that involves detail, that involves making tough choices, that means inheriting problems and having to grapple with them.

It means—governing means that you are having to prioritize. And you also begin to recognize that transformation doesn't occur overnight. I was having a conversation, I think, with some world leaders at the G–20 summit, and the discussion was around climate change and the fact that we're now moving the United States to the forefront, to leadership, as opposed to being in the caboose when it came to trying to deal with climate change. And some countries were feeling a little bit impatient: "Can't you get this done now?" "Why haven't we already affirmed the science that exists out there?"

I said, look, the United States is like an ocean liner. It's not a speed boat. If we make a shift of 5 degrees or 10 degrees, 10 years down the road, 15 years down the road, you're going to look back and we're going to be in a very different place than we otherwise would have been. And we have to have that long-term vision about where we're going.

Well, States are just like the country as a whole. And I am absolutely confident that as a consequence of the tough decisions that this Governor is making right now, Massachusetts 5 years, 10 years, 15, 20 years down the road is going to be a much better place. And that's what we're fighting for. We're fighting for—and what Deval is fighting for here is the same thing we're fighting for all across the country. Some pretty simple things, complicated to execute, but pretty simple concepts.

We want every child in America to have a world-class education so they can compete for any job in the world; that's goal number one. We want a health care system that is efficient and effective so that people are actually getting their money's worth, that families are not bankrupt because they get sick and governments are not bankrupt because all the money is going to insurance companies and drug companies. We want to make sure that we are at the forefront of clean energy and producing millions of jobs in solar and wind and biodiesel. We want to make sure that we are creating jobs for the future, not low-wage jobs, not just jobs at the bottom rungs of the service sector, although we want to make sure that those jobs are paying a living wage and have decent benefits. But we also want to make sure that we're creating the jobs building a new smart grid and laying broadband line all across this country.

That's the vision that we're looking for. We want to make sure that everybody can retire with some dignity and some respect. And all those things are achievable, but it's going to take some work. So I just want all of you to understand that the road between now and next November is going to be long; there are going to be lots of ups and downs. Because Deval is continuing to govern, he's not just going to shift into political mode, even though some of his political advisers may tell him to. This is actually one of the few flaws of this man, is he doesn't always take direction—[*laughter*]—as well as he should.

So he's going to still be governing; he's still going to be making some choices. Some of them may not be popular. But if all of you recognize that his core vision is right, that his integrity remains intact, that he is not tired, he's energized, he's ready to go, he's still fired up—if all of you have that same spirit, then I'm absolutely confident that this team right here is going to win.

And I just want you to understand—and the last thing I'm going to tell you, I want everybody to understand this—that what happens in Massachusetts is going to have implications all across the country. I cannot succeed as President unless I've got good partners at the State level. And frankly, people on Capitol Hill, they watch the tea leaves, and they say, "Well, gosh, if the kind of Governor who's implementing universal health care in Massachusetts, and if the kind of Governor who's making sure that education funding is flowing steadily, if the kind of Governor who is prioritizing clean energy and basic research and technology, if that kind of Governor isn't

rewarded, then maybe I shouldn't, as a Member of Congress or as a Senator, take some chances and take some tough stance in pursuit of that same vision."

And when the people of States reward courageous, hard-working Governors like that, that has implications for our national politics as a whole. So I just hope everybody here understands what a precious thing you have in Governor Deval Patrick and that you are going to be working as hard as you can and as sustained a way as you can in the months to come in order to make sure that he has another 4 years to do extraordinary service for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Thank you, everybody. Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:58 p.m. at the Westin Copley Place. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gov. Timothy P. Murray of Massachusetts.

Remarks at a Fundraiser for Governor Deval L. Patrick in Boston
October 23, 2009

The President. Hello, Boston! It is good to be back in Massachusetts. It's good to see some familiar faces. Some folks I haven't seen before; I'm glad about that too. [*Laughter*] In addition to this outstanding team behind me, I know that my great friend Congressman Mike Capuano is in the house, so give Mike a big round of applause.

Yes, it is good to be back in Boston. I've got some pretty good memories of this town. I spent 3 years in the library across the river—[*laughter*]—trying to make sure I graduated from law school. I came back here; I gave a little convention speech. That went okay. [*Laughter*] And it was exactly 2 years ago today, on a beautiful fall night in Boston Common, that I received the endorsement of a man that I am proud to stand with today, a man who's absolutely committed to fighting for Massachusetts's families and Massachusetts's future, your Governor, my dear, dear friend Deval Patrick.

Now, Deval and I go aways back. I was mentioning to some folks in the other room, we've got a lot in common. We both have ties to the south side of Chicago.

Audience member. Yeah!

The President. South side. [*Laughter*] We're both Sox fans.

Gov. Patrick. Be careful now.

The President. I just said "Sox." That's all I said. [*Laughter*] We're both surrounded by three beautiful women in our lives that keep us grounded, which means they tell us what to do. [*Laughter*] These days, I have to actually compete for attention with a dog. [*Laughter*] I don't know if Deval has to deal with that.

Deval supported me when I ran for the United States Senate in Illinois at a time when none of you could pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] And I remember when he came to me just after I had taken office and said, "Barack, I've got this crazy idea. I've got this feeling that the people of Massachusetts might be interested in a different kind of politics. I've got this hunger to serve."

Now, I have to say that this was when Deval was a bit of a long shot. He didn't have money or big-name support, and the pundits didn't give him a chance, although some people thought it was a good ballot name because they were sure a guy named "Patrick" must be Irish. [*Laughter*]

But here's the thing: Since he had endorsed me when nobody knew me and I had no chance, I had to return the favor, even though I really wasn't sure he had much of a chance. [*Laughter*] It would be pretty hard to say, "Well, now, Deval, hold on a second now." [*Laughter*] "Have you thought everything logically through?"—when Barack Hussein Obama had run for the United States Senate. [*Laughter*]

But here's what else was going on. I had a feeling about Deval that I've always had ever since I've known him. And as I watched him travel all across this Commonwealth, listening to you, building his campaign—house by house, block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood—I was reminded that Deval is confident

enough to understand that this isn't about him, it's about you, that this was your campaign, that you were building a movement for change that couldn't be denied. And that core integrity of his, that generous vision of his that everybody has a part to play in rebuilding the best possible America that we can, that's something that I felt somehow would end up being irresistible. And I've come back to Boston today because I need you to understand what a prize you've got in Deval Patrick and why we need Deval Patrick and Tim Murray more than ever. This is the team that's going to lead the Commonwealth of Massachusetts into the future.

Now, I don't have to tell you we're in challenging times, not just for Massachusetts, but for America. You see it in your own lives and your own communities. Too many folks are out of work, looking for work. Too many hard-working families are being squeezed by the skyrocketing costs of everything on one side and shrinking wages on the other. They're men and women who've worked hard all their lives, done everything right, and now they're worried about whether they can retire with dignity and respect or send their kids to college, whether they can be the kinds of husbands and wives, mothers and fathers that they hoped to be, because of economic factors that aren't under their control.

Audience member. We need health care!

The President. So—okay. [*Laughter*]

So I know these are tough times. I know folks are hurting. But I also know this: For the past 3 years, you've had leaders at the helm of this Commonwealth during one of the most difficult periods in its history. And you've had a leader who's been willing to make tough choices in tough times without ever forgetting who he's working for. You've had a leader who's been willing to put the interests of hard-working families ahead of special interests. You've had a leader who's woken up every day asking what he can do on behalf of the people of Massachusetts. That's the kind of Governor Deval Patrick's been. That's the kind of Lieutenant Governor that Tim Murray's been. That's the kind of leadership that you need.

Think about what they have done. In just—[*applause*]—think about what these guys have done. In just 3 years, Deval has delivered the reforms and real change that folks on Beacon Hill had been talking about for decades. He's taken on corruption. He's begun to rebuild the public trust by enacting the first comprehensive ethics and lobbying reform in three decades, transportation reform that's saved taxpayers almost $200 million, auto insurance reform that's introduced competition and saved the average family hundreds of dollars at the time that they need it most.

When it came to jump-starting job creation and turning the economy around, Deval and I, we've been working hand in hand. We worked together to enact a Recovery Act that's making a meaningful difference for families all across Massachusetts and all across America. Because of the Recovery Act, we've put a middle class tax cut into the pockets of 95 percent of hard-working families; that includes 2.4 million hard-working Massachusetts families.

We've helped stem the tide of layoffs in police departments and fire departments and schools all across this Commonwealth and across the country, keeping 100 police officers on Boston's streets alone, 215 teachers and support staff in Boston schools who otherwise would have been let go. We've increased and extended unemployment insurance for 16 million Americans to help them weather the economic storm, including nearly 420,000 right here in Massachusetts. We've made COBRA 65 percent cheaper to ensure that you don't lose your health insurance while you're looking for work. We've funded eight new affordable housing projects right here in Massachusetts that will create more than 900 jobs, building 450 housing units for Massachusetts families.

Now, the Recovery Act didn't just include the most progressive tax cut in American history. It didn't just include emergency relief for families who've borne the brunt of this recession. It didn't just help out States with their budgets. It made critical investments in our long-term priorities. And that's been the essence of the Patrick-Murray team, that sense of a long-term vision for the future.

Our Recovery Act made the largest investment in clean energy in American history, which helped double the number of solar energy jobs right here in Massachusetts. It made the largest investment in education in American history, thanks to the effort of Deval and other far-seeing Governors. It made the largest investment in our Nation's infrastructure since President Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System back in the 1950s, an investment that's putting Americans to work here in Massachusetts and all across America rebuilding roads and bridges and waterways.

Now, even as Deval is helping change the way business is done in Beacon Hill, even as he's leading Massachusetts through the most difficult economic period in our lifetimes, Deval has never lost sight of what makes Massachusetts strong today and what it takes to keep it strong going into the future.

He's solidified Massachusetts's position as not just a national leader in biotechnology, but a world leader, creating new jobs right now and a market for new jobs tomorrow. He's strengthened Massachusetts's position as a national leader in clean energy, convincing companies to create new green jobs right here in Massachusetts. He successfully implemented health reform so that 97 percent of this Commonwealth's residents today have health insurance. And because Deval and I know that the only reason we are here is because somebody somewhere gave us a chance at an outstanding education, he's worked to promote innovations in our schools and close the achievement gap for our kids and protect financial aid for higher education. And he's made the strongest investment in K through 12 funding in Massachusetts history so this Commonwealth remains not just the national leader in test scores, but an international leader in test scores.

That's not bad for 3 years. [*Laughter*] But you know, there's a tendency to take folks for granted, to ask, "Well, what have you done for me lately?" Look, that's understandable. That's part of what we sign up for. We asked for this incredible honor of leadership, and it means we are responsible for what happens during our watch.

And the reason I'm here today, the reason Deval Patrick is here today, the reason you're here today is because we know our work is far from over. We've still got huge challenges in this Commonwealth and across America. We're not going to rest until we solve them. We're not going to rest until everybody who's looking for work can find a job, until the markets aren't just about a stock market going up but about businesses hiring again, until the American Dream is within reach for anybody who believes in it, anybody who's willing to fight for it. We will not rest until that's happened.

It's not going to be easy. It's not going to happen overnight. But here's what I can say with absolute certainty: The work of forging a better future has begun. It's begun here in Massachusetts. It's begun across America.

We've begun to build a clean energy economy that can free ourselves from dependence on foreign oil and generate green jobs that can't be outsourced and pay well. We've begun to put in place better standards for our schools and make college and advanced training more affordable so that we're preparing American children, Massachusetts children to be able to compete for any job, anywhere in the world.

We're closer than ever to health reform nationally that will finally make quality, affordable health insurance available to those who don't have coverage and bring stability and security to Americans who do and finally get some control over skyrocketing health care costs that are bankrupting families and businesses and our State and Federal budgets.

I mean, think about it. For all the affordable health insurance, world-class education, new clean energy futures, a strong economy that works for everybody, that's fair. That's what Deval has been about. That's what Tim has been about. That's what you're about. That's why you're here.

But as I said, it's not going to be easy. And so in the months ahead, as you're going around, you're talking to your friends, your neighbors, your family members, you know what you're going to have to be fighting against. You'll have to fight against some misinformation that's always out there in political campaigns.

But you're also going to just have to fight against the core cynicism that people have when it comes to politics. I know folks here—a lot of you in the past have been skeptical about whether your leaders can or will do anything about really hard problems. And you have every right to be cynical and skeptical, because year after year, decade after decade, you've seen progress stymied by special interests and partisan gridlock, whether it's on Beacon Hill or in Washington.

But I'm here today because I want to remind you, you've got a Governor who represents a better kind of politics. He's not perfect. [*Laughter*] His wife will tell you. [*Laughter*] And as he mentioned, sometimes he's stubborn like a mule and he doesn't want to act the part of the politician. He doesn't like talking about himself and his accomplishments. But he's smart, he's honest, he's devoted to the people of this State. He's asked for nothing but the opportunity to serve with—for you, to serve the people of Boston and Pittsfield and Worcester and Plymouth, to serve all the people of Massachusetts.

But we're going to have to fight for him. Remember, when this campaign began, it wasn't just about him, it was about you. What are you willing to do? How hard are you willing to fight? We ought to give him our continued support because this is when it counts.

We face big challenges right now. You know, campaigns are always fun—well, not always. I mean, there was some times—[*laughter*]. But there's an aspect of the campaign, it's all about, you know, projecting our hopes and our dreams, and it's full of excitement. And now we're in governing mode, and governing is always tough because, yes, there are conflicting interests. We're in a democracy; it's complicated, things take time, people argue.

Our problems won't be solved overnight, especially problems that grew over the course of decades. They're going to take years, in some cases, to get us to where we want to be. But that's not a reason to lose heart.

Our first patriots here in Boston, they didn't say, "You know, that British Empire, that seems really big." [*Laughter*] "I'm not sure about this whole independence thing." [*Laughter*] FDR didn't say, "I don't think we've got what it takes to get through this Great Depression. Fear's not so bad." [*Laughter*] "I'm scared." [*Laughter*] JFK didn't say, "No, that Moon, that's just too far." [*Laughter*] "Let's go someplace closer." [*Laughter*]

That's not what we do. We're Americans. We persist. We rise to the challenge. Think about how this country was built: people striking out, not knowing what they might find but understanding that if they just stayed put they'd never get to where they wanted to be. They were willing to take enormous risks. That's in our DNA. That's where we come from. That's how all these folks here gathered together. That's who we are. That's who we have to be today.

So if you're willing to stand with me and Deval and Tim, if you're willing to stand up and keep fighting for our future, if you're willing to once again prove that there's nothing false about hope, then we're going to do what those previous generations did. We're going to build something better to leave to our children and our grandchildren.

And so I just want to make sure you guys aren't tired. I want to make sure you guys are energized. This is the fun part here, fighting for your future. I want everybody on the battlefield. I want you knocking on doors. I want you to make phone calls. We've got a lot of work to do. Our finish—business is unfinished. But if you all are working hard, we're going to reelect the Patrick-Murray team and all of you are going to be proud about what happens in this Commonwealth.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:34 p.m. at the Westin Copley Place. In his remarks, he referred to Diane Patrick, wife of Gov. Patrick, and their daughters Sarah and Katherine.

Remarks at a Fundraiser for Senator Christopher J. Dodd in Stamford, Connecticut

October 23, 2009

Hello, Connecticut! Hello, Stamford! It is good to be back in Connecticut. Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat; have a seat. Relax for a second. I'm just warming up here. [*Laughter*]

I'm going to talk a little bit about this guy in a second. Let me begin by just acknowledging some wonderful public servants who have just been serving their constituencies with great distinction for, in some cases, a lot of years.

Now, first of all, Congressman John Larson is in the house. Where's John? There he is, John Larson; Congressman Chris Murphy—Chris; Congressman Jim Himes—[*applause*]—yes, sir—this is Jim's district, so he's got the home court advantage; Attorney General Richard Blumenthal; and mayor of Stamford, Dannel Malloy is in the house.

I can see this is a feisty crowd. [*Laughter*] What are you guys eating? [*Laughter*] You don't know yet, huh? [*Laughter*] It's a surprise? All right.

It is great to be back in Connecticut. It is an honor to be here with and for your outstanding Senator, my great friend, Chris Dodd. Now, here's the general rule of politics: When you're President, you're not supposed to pick favorites. But I have a confession to make: From the moment I arrived in the United States Senate, Chris Dodd was one of my favorites. He—and contrary to what Chris thinks, it's not his good looks. [*Laughter*] Jackie may like that; that doesn't move me. [*Laughter*]

It's the fact that he's someone who believes deeply in the core ideals of our country and the nobility of public service, and he's lived those ideals from the moment he joined the Peace Corps as a young man through his leadership in the Senate today. He has never lost that wonderful quality that's all too rare in Washington: the quality of taking his work seriously, but not taking himself seriously—a man of good humor and a good heart. And that's why he is liked and respected not just in the Democratic Caucus, but across the aisle; that's why he's so effective, and why, over the past three decades, his name has appeared on some of the most important pieces of legislation that Congress has produced.

Today, every American who can take a leave from a job to care for a newborn or a relative who is sick, they can thank Chris Dodd. Every young child who has early access to educational opportunity through Head Start, thank Chris Dodd. Every firefighter and first responder who is safer on the job because of the FIRE Act and the SAFER Act, they can thank Chris Dodd. Chris has been so good that you could excuse him if he decided, "You know, I'm going to start taking it easy a little bit. I don't want to have to just work this hard." But that's not what he did. He—I don't know what—he's got some Energizer bunny battery in him or something—[*laughter*]—but this year, he's kind of gone crazy; he's just gone wild. I mean, look at what he's done this year. There are few leaders who have been as busy getting things done in Congress as Chris Dodd.

Just this year, led the fight to pass legislation that is helping homeowners keep their piece of the American Dream. Then he helped pass a law that will stop big tobacco from targeting our children. Then he was there to pass a national service bill that will inspire another generation of Americans to serve their country, just like Chris did when he served in the Peace Corps. Then he wrote the credit card legislation that finally became law this year, a law that will stop credit card companies from ripping off the American consumer with abusive fees and rate hikes. And that's only 9 months in; it's just the first 9 months. And in between—tonight he's got his swimming trunks; he's going to take the girls swimming at the hotel pool. [*Laughter*]

So Chris knows how to get things done in Washington. That's why he's currently leading the fight on not one, but on two of the most important issues that we face today and two of the biggest priorities in my agenda.

Before our friend and champion Ted Kennedy passed away this summer—and Teddy, Jr. is here tonight—he—[*applause*]—Teddy turned

to Chris and he asked him if he'd be the one to shepherd health reform through the committee that Teddy had chaired. And in that role, Chris did an outstanding job both leading and listening, incorporating Republican and Democratic ideas. And thanks to Chris Dodd's work and the work of Senators like Max Baucus and others, we are now closer to Ted Kennedy's dream of health care reform than we have ever been. It will pass this year, in part because of the work of Chris Dodd.

But Chris isn't just dealing with health care reform. He's also leading the fight to reform our financial industry so that we don't have another crisis like the one that brought our economy to its knees. Now, I know that there are a lot of hedge funds and financial institutions here in Stamford. We flew over by helicopter; we saw some of the housing around here. [*Laughter*] But I want to stress the urgency of this reform. I have always believed, and I know Chris believes, in the free market. And we believe with all our heart that the financial industry is essential to a healthy economy and the well being of the country as a whole. And that's why we stepped in. And we continue to believe it was the right thing to do, to step in to prevent a collapse in the financial sector that would have had far-reaching and devastating consequences for the American people. We came very close to a great depression.

And so we had to intervene. But I think all of us can agree that as a country, we should never again be faced with such a potential calamity because of the reckless speculation and deceptive practices of a short-sighted and self-interested few. So I have to say—[*applause*]—so I'd like to say to you tonight, if there are folks from the industry here tonight, join us. Don't fight us. Join us in passing what are necessary reforms. It is important for our country, and in the long run, it will be good for your industry to have a level playing field, where everybody knows the rules and everybody is competing fairly for the business of American consumers. It's the right thing to do.

Now, one of the most essential financial reforms is the one that Chris has been leading the charge on, a consumer financial protection agency whose mission will be to look out for the financial interests of ordinary Americans. And this is an agency that will equip every American who signs up for a mortgage or a credit card with the information they need to avoid getting ripped off by predatory lenders or big banks. Now, if the American people win this fight, these banks and lenders won't be able to exploit consumers through complicated contracts or fine print. No longer will they be permitted to game the system so consumers are at greater risk to face arbitrary penalties or fees. In a financial system that's never been more complicated, and at a time when middle class families are under such duress, such strain, it's never been more important for consumers to have their own watchdog. That's exactly what this agency will be.

And I have to say, it's predictable. A lot of the big financial firms, they don't like it very much, because confusion among consumers oftentimes means big profits. And lately we've seen an army of industry lobbyists descend on Capitol Hill to kill this proposal or at least to water it down. Now, fortunately, I think everybody understands now is the time to get this done. And despite all the lobbyists and all the power, we scored a major victory yesterday when the House banking committee voted in favor of a consumer financial protection agency. The lobbyists lost, the American people won. And thanks to the strong leadership of Chris Dodd, we're going to win again in the United States Senate.

Chris is leading that fight just as he's leading the fight against deceptive and punishing check overdraft fees, and a whole array of safeguards to ensure that hard-working Americans are treated fairly in our financial system. Every resident of this State and every American has a stake in his success.

So Chris has a lot on his plate these days. And that's because we're facing pretty big challenges as a nation right now. You know, it's important for all of us to remember what was happening when we walked through the front door of the White House, because, you know, there seems to be some selective memories afflicting certain people. [*Laughter*] We were facing an economic crisis unlike any we'd seen in generations. We were losing 700,000 jobs

per month. Our financial system was on the brink of collapse. And economists not just of the left, but of the right and the center, every political persuasion, were concerned about the possibilities of a depression.

And that's why we acted boldly and we acted swiftly to pass a Recovery Act that's made a difference in the lives of families across America. We just stopped by a small business, a landscaping firm that was able to benefit from an SBA loan facilitated through the Recovery Act. They are now hiring folks, just bought a new building. They are expanding right here, just next door to this hotel. We've put a tax cut into the pockets of 95 percent of working Americans as well as small-business owners. We've extended and increased unemployment insurance for 16 million Americans to help them get by in tough times. We made COBRA 65 percent cheaper so that if you lost your job, you didn't have to lose your insurance. We provided relief to States, including Connecticut, to help prevent them from having to lay off teachers and firefighters and police officers. According to initial estimates, it has saved—the Recovery Act has saved some 250,000 jobs just in our schools—just in our schools. And we've supported more than 30,000 loans to small businesses, which helped create thousands of jobs in the private sector.

But here's the thing: The Recovery Act wasn't just about tax cuts, the most progressive tax cut in the history of America. It wasn't just about emergency relief for middle class families who were buckling under the strain of this recession. It was also the largest investment in education in American history. It was the largest investment in clean energy in American history. It was the largest boost to medical and basic research in history, not just American history. It was the largest investment in infrastructure since Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System in the 1950s. All across the country, folks are rebuilding our crumbling roads and bridges, but also setting up smart grids and broadband lines where people hadn't been able to get to before.

And we didn't stop there. We passed the Lilly Ledbetter Act because we believe women should get paid the same as men for doing the same work. We lifted the ban on stem cell research and restored science to its rightful place in America. We extended health care to 11 million children across this country, 4 million of whom previously had no insurance. For the first time in our history, we've begun to put in place a new national policy aimed at both increasing fuel economy and reducing greenhouse gas pollution for all new cars and trucks sold in the United States of America.

So next time somebody asks, "Well, what have you been doing?"—[*laughter*]—simple fact is, we've already had one of the most productive first years of any administration. And you helped make it possible.

But as Chris pointed out, the reason you're here, the reason we're here, is because our work is not done. We know that there's still far too many Americans who are out of work and seeing their hours and their wages cut, too many Americans who are subject to the whims of health insurance companies dropping them because they've got a preexisting condition, charging exorbitant out-of-pocket fees, and millions of Americans who can't afford health insurance in the first place.

We know we still face enormous challenges in this country, and that's not news to you. But here's the thing, because there are a lot of longtime activists here and maybe some new people who got involved just in recent campaigns. Now, I certainly know, when I look at some of the young Congressmen who are here in the room, we didn't get involved in this because it was easy. You didn't decide to support our cause because you thought somehow that, a blink of an eye, we were going to solve health care or energy or education. And you certainly didn't sign up because once things got tough, you expected that we were just going to kick it on to somebody else, have some future generation, have some future President, have some future Congress deal with these things.

Now is the time for us to build a health care system that works for every American. Now is the time for us to create the kind of clean energy economy we need. Now is the time to make sure that every single child in America gets a first-class education so they can compete for jobs all across the globe.

And so we have to combine a sense of urgency with a sense that this is going to be hard. And we should draw energy from the fact that it's hard. We should be invigorated by the fact that it's hard, because that's the sign that what we're doing is worthwhile, the fact that we're able to pull off some things that haven't been done before.

And there are going to be arguments about these issues. This is a democracy: it's messy. [*Laughter*] That's the way it's supposed to be. That's the way it was designed to be. And I want all the non-Democrats who may be watching tonight or may be in the room—surprisingly enough—[*laughter*]—I want folks to know that I believe in a strong and loyal opposition. I believe in the two-party system, where ideas are tested and assumptions are challenged and I am not always right and Chris is not always right. And that back and forth, that debate, makes us better. That's how our democracy works.

Now, what I do reject is when folks just sit on the sidelines and they're rooting for failure, whether it's on health care or energy or the economy or the Olympics. [*Laughter*] What's going on there? I mean, it's the Olympics, guys, you know? [*Laughter*] You don't want America to host the Olympics? [*Laughter*] What I reject is when scoring political points is so important that you'd rather see failure. What I reject is when some folks want to go to the policies that helped get us into this mess in the first place, as if we don't remember.

I don't mind, and I know Chris doesn't mind; we don't mind cleaning up the mess that was left for us. We're busy; we got our mops; we're, you know, mopping the floor here. [*Laughter*] But I don't want the folks who made the mess to just sit there and say, "You're not mopping fast enough." Right? I don't want them saying, "You're not holding the mop the right way," or, "That's a socialist mop." I want them to grab a mop. Grab a mop! Grab a mop or a broom or something. Make yourself useful. [*Laughter*]

I think all of us in Washington, Democrat and Republican, we've got a responsibility to rise to the occasion, to look past our differences and understand this is a critical moment in our history. And we've got to move beyond the failed policies and broken politics that allowed our toughest problems to go unsolved for decades. I will work with anyone and everyone willing to do that and take heat from my own party in order to do that. But I've got to have a sense that everybody is trying to pull their weight.

You know, in the end, you travel this country, the American people, they're not looking for a lot. They know they've got to work hard. They don't expect government to solve all their problems. But if they are willing to work hard, then they hope they can find a job that pays a living wage, that they won't be bankrupt when they get sick, that they can save for a secure retirement, that they can send their kids to a great school so that they can aspire and achieve to things that the parents could never aspire and achieve.

I mean, that's all they're asking for. They want the opportunity to make the most of their lives. That's the chance every American deserves. That's the American Dream. That's the promise that Chris Dodd is working every day to fulfill.

And at this rare moment in history, we've been given a rare opportunity to change our world for the better. But it doesn't start in Washington. As good of a job as Chris is doing, it starts with you. It starts when you refuse to accept the status quo, when you say, "I'm not going to be distracted by the usual political games," when you reject cynicism, when you decide that we can close that gap between the world as it is and the world as it should be, that's when America moves forward. That's been the cause of Chris Dodd's life. And if everybody remembers that in the weeks and months to come, then I guarantee you, Chris is going to continue to be my partner as we remake Washington and we remake America and we remake the world.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:47 p.m. at the Hilton Stamford Hotel & Executive Meeting Center. In his remarks, he referred to Jackie Clegg Dodd, wife of Sen. Dodd, and their daughters Grace and Christina.

Statement on the 26th Anniversary of the Terrorist Attack on the United States Marine Corps Barracks in Beirut, Lebanon
October 23, 2009

We remember today the 241 American marines, soldiers, and sailors who lost their lives 26 years ago as the result of a horrific terrorist attack that destroyed the Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon. The military personnel serving in Beirut were there to bring peace and stability to Lebanon after years of internal strife and conflict. The murder of our soldiers, sailors, and marines on this day on 1983 remains a senseless tragedy.

We pay tribute on this day to the courage and sacrifice of those whose lives were lost in the Beirut attack, as well as their families and loved ones. We also wish to honor the brave service of all members of the United States military who are protecting Americans and promoting freedom and security around the world, as well as those international peacekeepers who serve in harm's way.

In remembering this terrible day of loss, we are at the same time hopeful that a new Government in Lebanon will soon be formed. We look forward to working with a Lebanese Government that works actively to promote stability in the region and prosperity for its people.

Message to the Congress on the Declaration of a National Emergency With Respect to the 2009 H1N1 Influenza Pandemic
October 23, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to section 201 of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1621), I hereby report that I have exercised my authority to declare a national emergency in order to be prepared in the event of a rapid increase in illness across the Nation that may overburden health care resources. This declaration will allow the Secretary of Health and Human Services, if necessary, to temporarily waive certain standard Federal requirements in order to enable U.S. health care facilities to implement emergency operations plans to deal with the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic in the United States. A copy of my proclamation is attached.

Further, I have authorized the Secretary of Health and Human Services to exercise the authority under section 1135 of the Social Security Act to temporarily waive or modify certain requirements of the Medicare, Medicaid, and State Children's Health Insurance programs and of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act Privacy Rule as necessary to respond to the pandemic throughout the duration of the public health emergency declared in response to the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
October 23, 2009.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 24. The related proclamation of October 23 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Weekly Address
October 24, 2009

All across America, even today on a Saturday, millions of Americans are hard at work. They're running the mom-and-pop stores and neighborhood restaurants we know and love. They're building tiny startups with big ideas that could revolutionize an industry, maybe even transform our economy. They are the more than half of all Americans who work at a small business or own a small business. And they embody the spirit of possibility, the relentless work ethic, and the hope for something better that is at the heart of the American Dream.

They also represent a segment of our economy that has been hard hit by this recession. Over the past couple of years, small businesses have lost hundreds of thousands of jobs. Many have struggled to get the loans they need to finance their inventories and make payroll. Many entrepreneurs can't get financing to start a small business in the first place. And many more are discouraged from even trying because of the crushing costs of health care, costs that have forced too many small businesses to cut benefits, shed jobs, or shut their doors for good.

Small businesses have always been the engine of our economy, creating 65 percent of all new jobs over the past decade and a half, and they must be at the forefront of our recovery. That's why the Recovery Act was designed to help small businesses expand and create jobs. It's provided $5 billion worth of tax relief, as well as temporarily reducing or eliminating fees on SBA loans and guaranteeing some of these loans up to 90 percent, which has supported nearly $13 billion in new lending to more than 33,000 businesses.

In addition, our health reform plan will allow small businesses to buy insurance for their employees through an insurance exchange, which may offer better coverage at lower costs—and we'll provide tax credits for those that choose to do so.

And this past week, I called on Congress to increase the maximum size of various SBA loans, so that more small-business owners can set up shop and grow their operations. I also announced that we'll be taking additional steps through our financial stability plan to make more credit available to the small, local, and community banks that so many small businesses depend on, the banks who know their borrowers, who gave them their first loan and watched them grow.

The goal here is to get credit where it's needed most: the businesses that support families, sustain communities, and create the jobs that power our economy. That's why we enacted the financial stability plan in the first place, back when many of our largest banks were on the verge of collapse, our credit markets were frozen, and it was nearly impossible for ordinary people to get loans to buy a car or home or pay for college. The idea was to jump-start lending and keep our economy from spiraling into a depression. Fortunately, it worked. Thanks to the American taxpayers, we've now achieved the stability we need to get our economy moving forward again.

But while credit may be more available for large businesses, too many small-business owners are still struggling to get the credit they need. These are the very taxpayers who stood by America's banks in a crisis, and now it's time for our banks to stand by creditworthy small businesses and make the loans they need to open their doors, grow their operations, and create new jobs. It's time for those banks to fulfill their responsibility to help ensure a wider recovery, a more secure system, and a more broadly shared prosperity. And we're going to take every appropriate step to encourage them to meet those responsibilities, because if it's one thing we've learned, it's that here in America, we rise and fall together. Our economy as a whole can't move ahead if small businesses and the middle class continue to fall behind.

This country was built by dreamers. They're the workers who took a chance on their desire to be their own boss; the part-time inventors who became the full-time entrepreneurs; the men and women who have helped build the

American middle class, keeping alive that most American of ideals: That all things are possible for all people, and we're limited only by the size of our dreams and our willingness to work for them. We need to do everything we can to ensure that they can keep taking those risks, acting on those dreams, and building the enterprises that fuel our economy and make us who we are.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:55 p.m. on October 22 in the Red Room at the White House for broadcast on October 24. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 23, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on October 24. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Terrorist Attacks in Baghdad, Iraq
October 25, 2009

I strongly condemn these outrageous attacks on the Iraqi people and send my deepest condolences to those who have lost loved ones. These bombings serve no purpose other than the murder of innocent men, women, and children, and they only reveal the hateful and destructive agenda of those who would deny the Iraqi people the future that they deserve. These attempts to derail Iraq's progress are no match for the courage and resilience of the Iraqi people and their determination to build strong institutions.

The United States will stand with Iraq's people and Government as a close friend and partner as Iraqis prepare for elections early next year, continue to take responsibility for their future, and build greater peace and opportunity. Together, we will continue to work for lasting security, dignity, and justice.

Remarks at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida
October 26, 2009

Thank you, everybody. How's it going, Jacksonville? Let me begin by thanking Secretary Mabus for the introduction, for your service, Ray. I know we've got a lot of naval aviators here, and Ray is a former surface warfare officer. But don't hold that against him. Don't hold that against him, now, because Ray Mabus is doing an outstanding job as Secretary of the Navy.

I also want to thank all your outstanding local leaders for welcoming me here today: Admiral Tim Alexander, your CO, Captain Jack Scorby, and your Command Master Chief, Jeff Hudson. To Chris Scorby and all the spouses who are with us, you hold our military families together. We honor you and we are grateful to you.

Now, it is great to be here at one of America's finest naval air stations. But we also have folks from Mayport and Kings Bay. And we have every service represented: Navy, Army, Air Force, Coast Guard, and United States Marines from Blount Island.

Now, military communities like this one take care of their own, your people, your families. But keeping you strong also takes the civilian community beyond the gate. So we want to thank Mayor John Peyton and all your great neighbors, the people of Jacksonville, for their incredible support. Give them a big round of applause.

Keeping you strong also takes leaders in Congress, like those here today: two great friends of yours, Representatives Ander Crenshaw and Corrine Brown, who are here. Give them a big round of applause right here. And a leader who fights for you as a member of the Armed Services Committee, Senator—and Army veteran—Bill Nelson is in the house.

Keeping you strong takes something else, a country that never forgets this simple truth: It's not the remarkable platforms that give the United States our military superiority, although you've got some pretty impressive aircraft here, I got to admit. It's not the sophisticated

technologies that make us the most advanced in the world, although you do represent the future of naval aviation. No, we have the finest Navy and the finest military in the history of the world because we have the finest personnel in the world. You are the best trained, the best prepared, the best led force in history. Our people are our most precious resource.

We're reminded of this again with today's helicopter crashes in Afghanistan. Fourteen Americans gave their lives. And our prayers are with these servicemembers, their civilian colleagues, and the families who loved them. And while no words can ease the ache in their hearts today, may they find some comfort in knowing this: Like all those who give their lives in service to America, they were doing their duty, and they were doing this Nation proud. They were willing to risk their lives, in this case, to prevent Afghanistan from once again becoming a safe haven for Al Qaida and its extremist allies. Today they gave their lives, that last full measure of devotion, to protect ours.

Now, it is our duty as a nation to keep their memory alive in our hearts and to carry on their work, to take care of their families, to keep our country safe, to stand up for the values we hold dear and the freedom they defended. That's what they dedicated their lives to, and that is what we must do as well.

So I say to you and all who serve: Of all the privileges I have as President, I have no greater honor than serving as your Commander in Chief. You inspire me. And I'm here today to deliver a simple message, a message of thanks to you and your families.

Now, being here, you join a long, unbroken line of service at Jacksonville, from the naval aviators from World War II to Korea to Vietnam, among them a great patriot named John McCain. You embody that sailor's creed, the "spirit of the Navy and all who have gone before": honor, courage, commitment.

In recent years, you've been tested like never before. We're a country of more than 300 million Americans, but less than 1 percent wears the uniform. And that 1 percent—you and those in uniform—bear the overwhelming burden of our security.

After months of exercises in the Pacific and stopping narcotraffickers off South America, you, the Mad Foxes, joined the recovery of that Air France crash off Brazil. After hundreds of combat missions over Iraq and Afghanistan, when Somali pirates kidnapped Captain Richard Phillips, you, the Fighting Tigers, were first on the scene. And others among you, the Nightdippers, were part of the carrier group that brought our captain home. You've delivered medical care to people around the world, as my wife Michelle saw this summer when she welcomed back to port the *Comfort*, including those of you from Naval Hospital Jacksonville. And like thousands of sailors in today's Navy, you've gone ashore to meet the mission of our time, like the Desert Lions who served in Iraq.

Today we also send our thoughts and prayers to all the folks from Jacksonville on the frontlines at this very moment: pilots and aircrews around the world, Navy corpsmen on the ground in Afghanistan. And those of you, the Dusty Dogs, who'll deploy next month to the Persian Gulf, you're going to make us proud.

But there is no service without sacrifice. And though few Americans will ever truly understand the sacrifices that you and your family make, day in, day out, tour after tour, year after year, I want you to know this: Your dedication to duty is humbling. Your love of country is inspiring. The American people thank you for your service. We honor your sacrifices. And just as you have fulfilled your responsibilities to our Nation, your Nation will fulfill its responsibilities to you.

That's the message that I just offered to the inspiring Gold Star families I met with a few moments ago, families who've made the ultimate sacrifice and whom we honor. And that's the message I bring to you and all our forces, families, and veterans around Jacksonville and across America.

You've made the most profound commitment a person can make, to dedicate your life to your country and perhaps give your life for it. So as your Commander in Chief, here's the commitment I make to you. To make sure you can meet the missions we ask of you, we are

increasing the defense budget, including spending on the Navy and Marine Corps. This week I'll sign that defense authorization bill into law.

To make sure we're spending our defense dollars wisely, we're cutting tens of billions of dollars in waste and projects that even the military says it doesn't need, so that that money can be better spent on taking care of you and your families and building the 20th—21st-century military that we do need.

To make sure we have the right force structure, we've halted reductions in Navy personnel and increased the size of the Marine Corps. And this year—the first time in the history of the All-Volunteer Force—the Navy and every component of every branch of the military, active, Guard, and Reserve, met or exceeded their recruiting and retention goals. And yes, that's due in part to tough economic times, but I say it's also a testament to you and everyone who volunteers to serve.

To make sure you're not bearing the burden of our security alone, we're enlisting all elements of our national power: diplomacy, development, and a positive vision of American leadership in the world.

And while I will never hesitate to use force to protect the American people or our vital interests, I also promise you this, and this is very important as we consider our next steps in Afghanistan: I will never rush the solemn decision of sending you into harm's way. I won't risk your lives unless it is absolutely necessary. And if it is necessary, we will back you up to the hilt, because you deserve the strategy, the clear mission, and the defined goals as well as the equipment and support that you need to get the job done. We are not going to have a situation in which you are not fully supported back here at home. That is a promise that I will always make to you.

Now, as you meet your missions around the world, we will take care of your families here at home. That's why Michelle has been visiting bases across the country. That's why the Recovery Act is funding projects like improvements to your hospital and a new child development center at Mayport. It's why we're increasing your pay, increasing childcare, helping families deal with the stress and separation of war.

And finally, we pledge to be there when you come home. We're improving care for our wounded warriors, especially those with post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injuries. We're funding the post-9/11 GI bill to give you and your families the chance to pursue your dreams. And we are making the biggest commitment to our veterans—the largest percentage increase in the VA budget, even when we've got very difficult times fiscally—in more than 30 years.

Now, these are the commitments I make to you, the obligations that your country is honor bound to uphold. Because you've always taken care of America, and America must take care of you always.

And know this. It's the spirit you live by every day. It's the pride, and yes, sometimes the anxiety, when you wave goodbye to your loved ones on the tarmac. It's the joy and relief when those loved ones come safely home. It's the dignity and respect you show every fallen warrior who comes home to Jacksonville, like the Navy aviator you honored 2 months ago.

Captain Michael Scott Speicher, kid from Orange Park, loving husband, devoted father, based at Cecil Field not far from here. On the first day of Operation Desert Storm, he was taken from us. And in the long years that followed, a Navy family and this city would endure the heartache of the unknown.

Through all those years, no one missed Scott more or fought harder to bring him home than his wife Joanne, his friend and former Navy pilot Buddy Harris, their children Meghan, Michael, Madison, and Makenzie. They were among the Gold Star families I met with, and we thank them for being here with us today. Where are they? Please stand up. Stand up, guys.

This summer, the news came. After 18 years, after all the dashed hopes, we found him. Scott's remains were finally coming home. The evening news and the morning papers told the story of that day, but few told the story of the days that followed.

It's the story of how you greeted the plane upon landing—hundreds of sailors—and escorted Scott's flag-draped casket to your chapel; how Navy honor guards kept constant vigil

through the night as so many of you passed by to pay your respects; how thousands of you—sailors and civilians—lined the streets of this base as you gave Scott back to the city he loved. That's what you did, that's what you do, not only for Scott, but for all the fallen warriors you bring home.

It's the story of how that procession retraced the steps of Scott's life, past the Jacksonville veterans memorial that now bears his name, past the church where he worshiped, the high school where he excelled, and Cecil Field where he served.

It's the story of how Jacksonville seemed to come to a standstill as people lined street after street to honor one of their own: Scott's friends but also total strangers, police and firefighters standing at attention, small children holding American flags, graying veterans giving a firm salute. And then, as Scott was finally laid to rest, a final fitting tribute, his old squadron roared overhead, high across the sky.

That's the spirit we see here today. You, men and women devoted to each other and to your country, and a proud country devoted to you. The example you set for all of us, That if you can come together, from every corner of America, every color, faith, creed, every background and belief, to take care of each other and to serve together, to succeed together, then so can we all. So can America.

So thank you for your service. And thank you for reminding us of the country we can and must always be. God bless you, Jacksonville. And God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:29 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Rear Adm. Townsend G. "Tim" Alexander, USN, commander, Navy Region Southwest; and Capt. John C. Scorby, Jr., USN, commanding officer, and Command Master Chief Jeffrey S. Hudson, USN, Naval Air Station Jacksonville, FL.

Statement on the 15th Anniversary of the Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty
October 26, 2009

Today marks the anniversary of the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel, signed 15 years ago near the Israeli-Jordanian border. As we honor this historic event, we remember that peace is always possible despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles. The courage of King Hussein and Prime Minister Rabin demonstrated that a commitment to communication, cooperation, and genuine reconciliation can help change the course of history. Today we honor the foresight of these leaders who stared down the past's doubters and stood together in the interest of common progress. As we work with Arabs and Israelis to expand the circle of peace, we take inspiration from what Jordan and Israel achieved 15 years ago, knowing that the destination is worthy of the struggle.

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Reception in Miami, Florida
October 26, 2009

The President. Hello, Miami. Thank you, guys. This is a pretty enthusiastic crowd here.

Audience member. I love you, man!

The President. I love you back. What did Bill Nelson say to you all to get you just—[*applause*]? All right, I can tell this is a somewhat informal crowd here. [*Laughter*] Nevertheless, there are some formal acknowledgements that I want to make.

First of all, one of the greatest partners I could ever ask for in turning this country around—we are so proud of her—please give a huge round of applause to Nancy Pelosi. She's got a pretty impressive team: one guy

from up north, Chris Van Hollen, who's doing unbelievable work on behalf of the "D-trip"; but also a couple of Floridians who are doing outstanding work, Debbie Wasserman Schultz and Congressman Kendrick Meek.

My former colleague and, you know, I don't care what he does politically because he's an astronaut—[*laughter*]—so that above all is most impressive to me, but he also happens to be one of the finest public servants we have, Bill Nelson. Thank you, Bill. We've got wonderful members of our DSCC/DCCC host committee; give yourselves a big round of applause. And finally, I don't know—is Alex still here? If she's not, I want to make sure that she gets acknowledged anyway. Alex Sink was in the house. And I just saw that Congressman Grayson is here as well; give him a big round of applause.

It's good to be back in Florida. I want you to know I love you, and I appreciate everything that you've done. A lot of you were on the frontlines of our campaign. You spent countless hours knocking on doors and making phone calls.

Audience member. We did!

The President. Yes, we did. Not a day goes by that I don't think about the obligations that I have to every American who put all their hopes and dreams into a cause that wasn't just about winning an election, it was about changing the country.

And, you know, it's been less than a year. Although I know it seems longer, it's been less than a year since the Obama family packed up, moved into the White House. I'm here to report Sasha and Malia are doing great. Michelle is an outstanding First Lady. We now have Bo so that I'm not always surrounded by women in my house. [*Laughter*] Bo and I, we share the doghouse sometimes. [*Laughter*]

But it's important to remember what happened when we walked through the door, because there's been some selective memory out there going on. We were facing the worst economic crisis we'd seen since the Great Depression, losing 700,000 jobs a month, our financial system on the brink of collapse. Economists were worried that we were going to slip into a depression.

That's why we acted swiftly and boldly, and we passed a Recovery Act that's made the difference in the lives all across Florida and all across America, put tax cuts into 95 percent—into the pockets of 95 percent of working families and small businesses all across the country. We extended unemployment insurance for 16 million Americans, gave COBRA coverage that was 65 percent cheaper to people who are out there looking for jobs in this unbelievably difficult economic climate. We provided relief to States so they wouldn't have to lay off teachers and cops and firefighters. According to initial reports, we've saved 250,000 jobs just in schools across America. We've given loans, supported loans to more than 30,000 small businesses, including more than 13,000 in this State, which created thousands of jobs in the private sector.

But here's the thing about the Recovery Act people don't seem to remember. It wasn't just the most progressive tax cut policy in American history. It wasn't just emergency relief for States and individuals. It was also—people don't realize this—the single largest Federal investment in education in our history. It was the largest investment in clean energy in our history. It was the largest boost to medical research and basic research in our history. It was the single largest investment in infrastructure since Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System back in the 1950s. And that's putting people back to work all across Florida and all across America.

But we didn't stop there. We passed the Lilly Ledbetter because we think women should be paid the same as men. We lifted the ban on stem cell research and began restoring science to its rightful place. We extended health care to 11 million children across this country, 4 million of whom never had insurance. We passed a national service bill named after Ted Kennedy, encouraging people to give back all across this country. We passed laws that prevented fraud in housing, prevented unfair rate hikes and fees charged by credit card companies. We passed a law to protect our children from big tobacco companies. For the first time in our history we put into place a national policy aimed at both increasing fuel economy and increasing—and

reducing greenhouse gas pollution for all new cars and trucks sold in the United States.

So here's the bottom line. In 9 months we've already had—if we just stopped now, we'd already have one of the most productive legislative sessions in history—if we just stopped now. And you made it possible. But of course, that's just what we did domestically.

Internationally, we've begun a new era of engagement. We're working with our partners to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. We're seeking a safer, more secure world free of nuclear weapons. We're working in concert with nations on every continent to stem the economic downturn, to deal with climate change. We banned torture. We're rebuilding our military. We're reaffirming our alliances. We are going to close Guantanamo. We are serious about this. We've made good progress taking the fight to Al Qaida, from Pakistan to Somalia——

Audience member. Won the Nobel Peace Prize.

The President. Yes, I did that too. That was unexpected. [*Laughter*]

And of great interest to the folks here in Miami, we have reopened a climate of diplomacy and good will with Latin America that had been frayed very badly.

But look, let's face it, the reason you're here tonight is because we've got more work to do. Too many people are out there looking for work. Too many people are seeing their hours cut. Too many Americans subject to the whims of insurance companies and are losing their health insurance or can't afford health insurance at all. Too many good people are worried about whether they're going to be able to retire, a lot of seniors having to go back to work; too many people losing their homes.

So this is not news to you. You've seen it in your own communities; you understand the enormous stress that families are under. But here's the thing I want everybody to understand. When we ran we knew we weren't going to solve every problem in 9 months. Right?

Audience members. Right.

The President. At least I hope you understood that. What we understood was, is that we had dug a deep hole for ourselves, and we were going to have to work really hard, first to get ourselves out of the hole, to make sure that we yanked this economy out of a potential catastrophe, and then to start rebuilding, both domestically and internationally. And that's what we're doing.

So now is the time for us to build a clean energy economy that will free ourselves from foreign oil and will generate new green jobs in the process and will help save the planet. Now is the time to transform our education system, and we are making enormous progress on the education front. Now is the time to start putting in place strong rules of the road to prevent the kind of financial catastrophe that we saw on Wall Street. And now is the time to pass health care. We're not going to wait another year or a year after that or a year after that. Now is the time to do it.

And if you've been following what's been happening in Washington, all the naysayers, you remember, I mean, back in August, "Oh, this thing is dead, it's terrible; people are out." And what did we do? We just keep on working. Because we understand that premiums have doubled over the past decade, and they'll double again in the next decade if we do nothing. We know that there are millions who have been denied coverage because of preexisting conditions. We know that we have no choice but to make sure that we've got a health system in this country that makes it more safe and secure for people who have health insurance, provides health insurance to people who don't, and make sure that we're driving down costs for everybody—families, businesses, and our government. And that is what we are going to accomplish. Nobody is going to be able to stand in the way of progress on this front.

We are closer than we've ever been to passing health insurance reform—closer than we've ever been. But it's not going to get easier from here on out; it's going to get harder. Now is the time when all the special interests start saying, "Oh, this is really going to happen," and "We might lose some of our profits." And they start paying big lobbyists, and they start, you know, twisting arms.

And that's why all of you are so important. See, you can't just count on change happening

in Washington. You've got to make it happen. You've got to push. I promise you, Members of Congress listen to you a lot more than they listen to me. And so the more that you guys are organizing and mobilizing and understanding that our job is not done—it's not, it's barely begun—the better off we're going to be.

When I ran for the Presidency nobody gave us a chance. But part of the excitement of our campaign—and some of you remember because some of you were there from the very beginning—some of the excitement was not that it was easy; it was that it was hard, that we understood that we were trying to pull off something that had not been done before.

Well, governing is even harder than campaigning. [*Laughter*] But that same sense of energy, that same sense of commitment, that same willingness to just keep on working and going at it, day in, day out, even when things seem tough, even when it looks like what we're trying to achieve isn't going to happen, that's how we end up doing things that nobody expects. And that's where we're at right now.

So I just want all of you guys to understand that I am not tired, I'm just—I am energized. I am excited. I'm still fired up. I'm still ready to go. And if all of you are fired up and ready to go with me, then I guarantee you that we're going to get health care passed, we're going to get education reform, we're going to get an energy bill that works, we're going to get financial regulatory reform, and we are going to keep on working until every American is able to get a decent job that pays a living wage, a good education for their kids, a retirement that is secure, health care for every single American. That's what we're working for.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:12 p.m. at the Fontainebleau Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Christopher Van Hollen, chairman, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee; Chief Financial Officer Adelaide "Alex" Sink of Florida; and Rep. Alan Grayson. The President also referred to Public Law No. 111–2, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 27.

Remarks at a Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Dinner in Miami
October 26, 2009

The President. Thank you. Some special acknowledgments: First of all, I don't think people quite understand, Nancy Pelosi is not simply the first woman Speaker of the House; I think she's going to go down as one of the greatest Speakers of all time. And she's very nice, and she's very friendly, but, boy, she is tough. [*Laughter*] And that's what you need when you're putting up with all the criticism and the carping and the griping, and that's from the Democrats. [*Laughter*] I mean, you should see what she has to put up with from the Republicans. So I could not have a better partner in trying to move the country than Nancy Pelosi.

We've got some wonderful other elected officials that I want to acknowledge very briefly. First of all, my former colleague, a great Senator and, most importantly, former astronaut, Bill Nelson—please give Bill a big round of applause. Somebody who is doing a great job on behalf of the DCCC, Chris Van Hollen is in the house. Three outstanding Members of Congress from Florida who are here: Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Kendrick Meek, Alan Grayson. And it is my expectation that she will be the next Governor of the great State of Florida—Alex Sink is in the house.

Now, I saw you guys taking pictures, and I talked about the family, and, you know, I don't know how much more you want to hear from me before you get to dinner, but I want to start off mainly by saying thank you. There are a lot of people in this room who were there from the start when nobody could pronounce my name, and when you tried to explain to your friends that you were supporting Barack Obama, they'd

say, huh? And then there are people in this room who picked up the baton once a hard-fought nomination was completed.

But across the board, you have people in this room who have not just contributed money, but contributed time and energy, their reputations, to moving this country in a new direction. And whether it's at the DNC level, the DSCC level, the DCCC—whatever "D" it is that you participated in—I want you to know that I'm incredibly grateful. And it has made an enormous difference to our country.

If you think about what we were confronting 9 months ago, I think people are starting to have some selective memory. It's starting to get a little hazy, so let me just remind you. First of all, it's only been 9 months since the Obama family moved into the White House. I'm here to report, by the way, Malia and Sasha are doing great. Michelle is a fabulous First Lady. We have a new dog, Bo, who is the only other male in the household. [*Laughter*] And he and I are often in the doghouse together. [*Laughter*]

But let's just think about what it was like when we entered into the White House 9 months ago. We were losing 700,000 jobs a month. The financial system was on the brink of meltdown. Prominent economists from both sides of the economic spectrum were suggesting that we might be going into a great depression—not a recession, but a great depression. And I think people were fearful that things might start spinning out of control.

And that's why, working with Nancy Pelosi and the other Members of Congress here, we acted so swiftly and we acted so boldly to pass a Recovery Act that has pulled us back from the brink. And although usually I try not to do a tally of what it is that we've accomplished, since you guys are early stakeholders in what we've done, I want you to understand what we did just with the Recovery Act.

First of all, as a consequence of the Recovery Act, we provided millions of people unemployment insurance who otherwise would have been in a hopeless situation. We made sure that COBRA, which is the main health care program for people who've lost their job, was 65 percent cheaper so that they could hang onto their health insurance while they were looking for a job. We made sure that the States had enough money so that they didn't have to lay off teachers and police officers and firefighters. It's estimated that just in schools alone, we saved 250,000 jobs across America; 250,000 educators, education professionals, would have been laid off had it not been for our swift action.

But we didn't just help States who were burdened under plummeting tax revenues. We didn't just help individuals who were losing their jobs or seeing their hours cut back. The Recovery Act was also the largest Federal investment in education in history—in history. It also happened to be the largest investment in clean energy in history. It was also the largest investment in basic research and science and R&D in history. It also happened to be the largest investment in infrastructure since Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System.

So all told, this not only helped pull us back from the brink—and now suddenly, everybody takes for granted the stock market at 9,000 or 10,000. People just take for granted that, well, you know, it looks like industrial production is kicking back up. Not only did we steer the economy away from potential catastrophe, but we also laid the groundwork now for making sure that our kids are going to be able to compete in an international, global marketplace.

We also made sure that we can get back on the frontlines of energy and not simply react to whatever oil producers decide should be the price of a barrel of oil today or tomorrow. We also set in motion the kinds of innovation and technological investment that is going to determine whether or not America remains at the cutting edge for the foreseeable future.

So that's just the Recovery Act. We did that, by the way, in January, the first month I was in. Now, we didn't stop there. So let's see what else we did. We passed something called the Lilly Ledbetter Act because we believe that women should be paid the same as men for the same work. We lifted the ban on stem cell research because we believe that science should guide Federal policy. We made sure that we passed the toughest bill regulating

credit cards in a generation. We banned housing fraud and put some serious teeth into enforcement. We made sure that 11 million children had health insurance, including 4 million who had never had it before.

We passed a national service act that allows young people and not so young people to participate in community service—the kind of programs that—where's Alonzo and Tracy?—the kinds of programs that you see, the outstanding work that's being done in Miami. We're giving opportunities for young people to get involved all across the country in those kinds of service activities giving back to their community.

What else, Nancy?

Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi. Veterans.

The President. Veterans, we just made sure that veterans are not going to have to wait for their budgets and that they're going to be in place. And by the way, we increased funding for veterans' services by more than had been done in 30 years.

Now, this is all just domestically. Then it turns out I got this other side of my portfolio, two wars. And as promised, we are on a pathway to removing our troops from Iraq and putting Iraq in the position where they can secure their own country. We are finally getting Afghan policy right after long years of drift. We've put forward a vision for reducing nuclear stockpiles and moving towards a safer and more secure world without nuclear weapons. We have mended fences and strengthened our alliances with countries on every continent so that they know that they have a partner in America, and America once more is viewed as a leader.

Now, that's just been in 9 months. Here is my main message to you: We're just getting started. I know that the battles out there seem bruising and there are people saying mean things about me and folks are worried. And I try to explain to Dwyane and these other ball players, just because I'm skinny doesn't mean I'm not tough. [*Laughter*] I don't rattle. I'm not going to shrink back, because now is the time for us to continue to push and follow through on those things that we know have to be done that haven't been done for decades.

We know that our education system is inadequate to a new global economy. I mean, if you looked at how African American and Hispanic children are doing here in Miami or anywhere in the country, it is unacceptable. And we know that is our future workforce. And if they are not trained and getting a decent education, then nobody is going to be doing well in this country.

We know that it is unsustainable for us to keep on importing more and more oil. When OPEC first started and Jimmy Carter and Richard Nixon and all those folks announced that we were going to move on the path of energy independence, we were importing 30 percent of our oil. We're now importing 70 percent. Do the math. Our economy can't sustain it, and by the way, neither can the environment. And every time I fly into Florida, I got to say, you know, that water is really close everywhere you go. You don't want an extra foot or two of sea. And so we've got to take that seriously. Now is the time to do it by passing serious energy legislation.

Now is the time to pass health care. And for those of you who have health insurance, I know that sometimes this seems like, well, is this something we can afford to do? Let me tell you, premiums doubled for individuals over the last decade. They will double again in the coming decade. But for businesses, it's even worse. Anybody here who's a businessperson knows what's happened to your premiums. You've seen them go up in one year 28 percent, 30 percent. And at some point, you had to make a decision, and then you've got to tell your employees, "Look, I know it's right to cover you, I want to cover you, but I can no longer afford to cover you."

And so this is not just an issue for the millions of people who don't have health insurance. This is an issue for the people who have health insurance and don't understand what it is that could be happening in—almost certainly will happen in the years ahead, unless we get a handle on it. And by the way, the Federal Government can't afford it either. And neither can State governments. We will go bankrupt. So if you're out there thinking we also have to get control of our budget—and we do—the single best way for us

to do it is to make sure that we pass health care reform.

Now, this is not going to be easy, but I am absolutely confident that we are going to get health care done by the end of this year, and Nancy Pelosi is just as confident. That's part of the reason I'm so confident, is Nancy is confident. [*Laughter*] And we are going to get an energy bill that is serious and deals not only with dependence on oil but also on climate change. And we're going to get a serious education bill that makes college more affordable for young people.

But none of these things are easy. And one of the things that I always try to emphasize to folks is we have to take a long view in this process. I was talking to some G–20 leaders who were kind of surprised on some of the debates about health care. They were saying, "Barack, why are these people running around putting a Hitler moustache on you? You're just trying to give health care to people." I said, "Yes, that's unusual." [*Laughter*]

But what I said was, you know, America is not a speed boat, it's an ocean liner. And it takes time to move a country this big, particularly because we are a democracy. And that's a good thing. We're supposed to have robust debate. Change isn't supposed to be easy. We're supposed to have to fight for it. And the fact that we've got the other party challenging us and pushing us and poking us on, that's a good thing. Ultimately, we will have a better product as a consequence of that. I want a competition of ideas. I want a strong and loyal opposition.

Now, what I won't abide by are people just standing on the sidelines who prefer to see defeat to actually getting something done because they think it provides a political advantage. These are folks who are cheering about us not getting the Olympics. What's up with that? It's the Olympics. I mean, the Olympics. Who roots against the United States getting the Olympics? [*Laughter*]

So my door is going to be open to working with the other side, and I know Nancy feels the same way, if they actually want to solve the challenges that we face. But if you're just going to stand on the sidelines, then I'm not going to have too much time for you. In fact, lately I've been feeling like somebody made a big mess and I'm—I got my mop, and I'm mopping the floor, and the folks who made the mess, they're standing there, "You're not mopping fast enough. You're not holding the mop the right way. It's a socialist mop." [*Laughter*] You know what, just grab a mop. [*Laughter*] Help me out here. Help out your country. Clean up the mess that you made.

So let me leave you with this thought, though, that as difficult as these last 9 months have been and as challenging as the next 9 months and the next 9 months after that will be, I just want to remind everybody what I meant when I talked about hope during the campaign. You know, hope is not blind optimism. It's not pie in the sky, everything is going to be just fine, we're just going to sit back and somehow those things that we wish for magically happen. That's not hope.

Hope is understanding what needs to be done and having confidence that if you work hard enough, if you sweat hard enough, if you're willing to mix it up and overcome setbacks and stare challenges in the face, that you can still achieve. That was the essence of our campaign when we started off. We didn't think, boy, this is going to be a cakewalk, getting a guy named Barack Hussein Obama elected President. [*Laughter*] Jeremy, do you remember us saying that? We didn't say that.

What we did say was this is what has to happen, this is where the country needs to go, and we are going to put our heart and soul into it, because we have confidence in the American people and we have confidence that if we do the right thing, then, you know what, the country is going to be better off. That was the source of excitement in our campaign. That was why it felt special. That's why we did something that nobody thought could be done.

And that's the same attitude that I want all of you to have as we move forward. None of this is a sure thing. Don't sign up to improve America if you think that it's just automatically going to happen on your timetable, and if it doesn't, you get disheartened.

But if you are willing to stand with us and work hard, if you understand how difficult and

challenging it's going to be, and yet you still are determined to move forward anyway, then I'm telling you, I don't think there's anything that can stop us. And when I say "us," I don't mean Democrats, I mean us as Americans. There is nothing this country cannot accomplish, and I am absolutely confident that our best days are still ahead of us. But we've got to earn it. It's not a given. The future is something you earn. That's what we're fighting for right now, and you're helping us do it.

So thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:38 p.m. at the Fontainebleau Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Chief Financial Officer Adelaide "Alex" Sink of Florida; former National Basketball Association center Alonzo Mourning and his wife Tracy; Dwyane Wade, guard, National Basketball Association's Miami Heat; and Jeremy Bird, deputy director, Democratic National Committee. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 27.

Remarks at the DeSoto Next Generation Solar Energy Center in Arcadia, Florida

October 27, 2009

Thank you so much. Well, first of all, let me thank Lew Hay and his visionary leadership at Florida Power & Light. It's an example of a company that is doing well by doing good. And I think it's a model for what we could duplicate all across the country.

To Greg Bove, who just gave me the tour and was a construction manager for this facility, congratulations. We've got a couple of special guests here: Representative Kathy Castor from Tampa, a great friend, Arcadia Mayor Dr. Roosevelt Johnson, and State Representative Keith Fitzgerald from Sarasota. And I want to once again thank Lew for the generous introduction. I want to congratulate you and all the workers who are involved in this outstanding facility for Florida Power & Light.

It's an honor to be here on a very big day, not just for Arcadia, but for the cause of clean energy in America. With the flip of a switch, FP&L will—has moved the solar panels behind me into a position where they can catch the Sun's rays. And now, for the very first time, a large-scale solar power plant, the largest of its kind in the entire Nation, will deliver electricity produced by the Sun to the citizens of the Sunshine State. And I think it's about time.

This plant will produce enough power to serve the entire city of Arcadia. Its construction was a boost to your local economy, creating nearly 400 jobs in this area. And over the next three decades, the clean energy from this plant will save 575,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions, which is the equivalent of removing more than 4,500 cars from the road each year for the life of the project. Think about that, 45,000 [4,500]* cars from the road each year for the life of the project.

And yet, to realize the full potential of this plant and others like it, we've got to do more than just add extra solar megawatts to our electrical grid. That's because this grid, which is made up of everything from power lines to generators to the meters in your home, still runs on century-old technology. It wastes too much energy, it costs us too much money, and it's too susceptible to outages and blackouts.

To offer one analogy, just imagine what transportation was like in this country back in the 1920s and 1930s before the Interstate Highway System was built. It was a tangled maze of poorly maintained back roads that were rarely the fastest or the most efficient way to get from point A to point B. Fortunately, President Eisenhower made an investment that revolutionized the way we travel, an investment that made our lives easier and our economy grow.

* White House correction.

Now, it's time to make the same kind of investment in the way our energy travels, to build a clean energy superhighway that can take the renewable power generated in places like DeSoto and deliver it directly to the American people in the most affordable and efficient way possible. Such an investment won't just create new pathways for energy, it's expected to create tens of thousands of new jobs all across America in areas ranging from manufacturing and construction to IT and the installation of new equipment in homes and in businesses. It's expected to save consumers more than $20 billion over the next decade on their utility bills. And I know nobody minds seeing their utility bills cut. I'm sorry, Lew, but they really don't mind that. [*Laughter*] It will make our grid more secure and more reliable, saving us some of the $150 billion we lose each year during power outages. It will allow us to more effectively transport renewable energy generated in remote places to large population centers, so that a wind farm in rural South Dakota can power homes in Chicago. And by facilitating the creation of a clean energy economy, building this 21st-century energy infrastructure will help us lay a foundation for lasting growth and prosperity.

So that's why today, I'm pleased to announce that under the Recovery Act, we are making the largest ever investment in a smarter, stronger, and more secure electric grid. This investment will come in the form of 100 grants totaling $3.4 billion, grants that will go to private companies, utilities, cities, and other partners who have applied with plans to install smart grid technologies in their area.

And throughout this week, the members of my Cabinet are going to be fanning across the country talking about some of the winning projects. Some of the projects involve modernizing old, inefficient transmission lines that just waste too much energy. And to speed that process along, nine Federal agencies have signed an agreement that will help break down the bureaucratic barriers that currently make it slow and costly to build new transmission lines on Federal lands.

But most of the projects that are receiving grants involve the installation of what are known as smart meters, devices that will have a direct benefit for consumers who want to save money on their electric bills. For example, even as Florida Power & Light is bringing this solar plant on line today, it also is deploying hundreds of thousands of these smart meters in people's homes throughout Florida. Much like the Recovery Through Retrofit plan we launched last week to boost the weatherization and retrofit industry, these devices will help you greatly improve the energy efficiency in your own home.

Now, let me explain what's going on with these smart meters. Smart meters will allow you to actually monitor how much energy your family is using by the month, by the week, by the day, or even by the hour. So coupled with other technologies, this is going to help you manage your electricity use and your budget at the same time, allowing you to conserve electricity during times when prices are highest, like hot summer days. Through these investments in a variety of smart grid technologies, utilities like Florida Power & Light will also be able to monitor the performance of its electricity grid in real time, which means they'll be able to identify and correct service interruptions more quickly and effectively. And all this information will help increase renewable energy generation, provide support for plug-in electric vehicles, and reduce the carbon pollution that causes climate change.

Here in this region of Florida, this project will reduce demand for electricity by up to 20 percent during the hottest summer days that stress the grid and power plants. It will provide smart meters to 2.6 million more customers. And most importantly, it will create thousands of jobs, good jobs, by the way, that can't be outsourced, jobs that will last and jobs that pay a decent wage.

On their own, the opening of this new solar plant or the installation of new smart meters or the investment in grid modernization will not be enough to meet the challenges posed by our dependence on fossil fuels. But together, we can begin to see what a clean energy future will look like. We can imagine the day when you'll be able to charge the battery on your plug-in hybrid car at night, because your smart

meter reminded you that nighttime electricity is cheapest. In the daytime, when the Sun is at its strongest, solar panels like these and electricity stored in car batteries will be able to power the grid with affordable, emission-free energy. The stronger, more efficient grid would be able to transport power generated at dams and wind turbines from the smallest towns to the biggest cities. And above all, we can see all this work that would be created for millions of Americans who need it and who want it, here in Florida and all across the country.

So we're on the cusp of this new energy future. In fact, a lot of it is already taking place. Even as I'm here today, Vice President Biden is in Delaware announcing the reopening of a once-shuttered GM factory that will soon put people back to work building plug-in, electric hybrid vehicles. On Friday, I was in Boston—[*applause*]. That's good news. On Friday, I was in Boston, where workers will soon be breaking ground on a new Wind Technology Testing Center that will allow researchers in the United States to test the world's newest and largest wind turbine blades for the very first time. And there are recovery projects like this in cities and counties all across the country.

So at this moment, there is something big happening in America when it comes to creating a clean energy economy. But getting there will take a few more days like this one and more projects like this one. And I've often said that the creation of such an economy is going to require nothing less than the sustained effort of an entire nation, an all-hands-on-deck approach similar to the mobilization that preceded World War II or the Apollo project. And I also believe that such a comprehensive piece of legislation that is taking place right now in Congress is going to be critical. That's going to finally make clean energy the profitable kind of energy in America, legislation that will make the best use of resources we have in abundance, through clean coal technology, safe nuclear power, sustainably grown biofuels, and energy we harness from the wind, waves, and Sun.

The House has already acted and passed such legislation, and the Senate is on the way. In fact, just today, the Environment and Public Works Committee, under the leadership of Senator Barbara Boxer, is holding the Senate's first hearings on this bill.

The creation of a clean energy economy has to be made as swiftly and carefully as possible, to ensure that what it takes to grow this economy in the short, medium, and long term is no longer delayed. And I'm pleased to report that a consensus is growing to achieve exactly that, consensus between Democrats and Republicans, environmentalists and evangelicals, labor leaders and especially so many business leaders like Lew that are ready to jump on board because they understand that the growth of clean energy can lead to the growth of our economy.

Now, I have to be honest with you, though. The closer we get to this new energy future, the harder the opposition is going to fight, the more we're going to hear from special interests and lobbyists in Washington whose interests are contrary to the interests of the American people. Now, there are those who are also going to suggest that moving towards a clean energy future is going to somehow harm the economy or lead to fewer jobs. And they're going to argue that we should do nothing, stand pat, do less, or delay action yet again.

I just want to point out we've heard such arguments before. We've engaged in this same type of debate a lot of times through our history. People don't like change, and they get nervous about it. Lew and I were just talking about it. He said especially utility executives get nervous about change. [*Laughter*]

It's a debate between looking backwards and looking forward, between those who are ready to seize the future and those who are afraid of the future. And we know which side the United States of America has always come down on. We know that we've always been a people who were unafraid to reach for that more promising future. We know that the promise of places like DeSoto and projects like the creation of a modern electricity grid mean a continuation of that long march of progress in this country. And we refuse to believe that our politics are too broken to make the energy future we dream of a reality.

I know what the American people are capable of when they're called upon to meet big challenges. I know it because I've seen here in Arcadia and I've seen it all across America. This

is the nation, after all, that harnessed electricity and the energy contained in an atom, that developed the steamboat and the modern solar cell, that connected a continent with a massive system of highways and railroads. And I believe we can blaze such trails again, and I commend all of you for being so critical in these early first steps. Congratulations to you on your extraordinary achievement, and when it comes to the development of clean, renewable energy, I hope there are going to be a lot of days like this one to come. I know I'm going to be working as hard as I can to make it possible.

And while I'm here, I just want to introduce Carol Browner, who works with me in our White House, and she is helping to lead the charge in Washington. She just happens to be from Florida, and so she knows a little bit about the Sunshine State. We are so excited by what you've done, and we are absolutely confident we're just going to keep on building on the great progress that you've already made.

Thank you, Arcadia. Thank you, Florida.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:05 p.m. at the DeSoto Next Generation Solar Energy Center. In his remarks, he referred to Lewis Hay III, chairman, Florida Power & Light Co.; and Greg Bove, construction manager, DeSoto Next Generation Solar Energy Center.

Remarks at a Rally for Gubernatorial Candidate R. Creigh Deeds in Norfolk, Virginia

October 27, 2009

The President. Hello, Virginia! Thank you, Virginia! Well, it's good to be back in Norfolk. It's good to be back in Virginia.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back. I am so proud to stand up here with two Virginia leaders, two men who wake up every single day thinking about your future, your family's future, the future of this Commonwealth, two men of great character. The only difference is one's the Governor and one's going to be the Governor: Tim Kaine and Creigh Deeds.

In addition to these outstanding leaders, there are a couple other people I just want to acknowledge. I want to say thank you to the Old Dominion University President, Brocerick—he told me your football team is doing all right; a great Member of Congress, Congressman Bobby Scott; Richmond Mayor Dwight Jones; Norfolk Mayor Paul Fraim; State Senator Yvonne Miller; Delegate Kenny Alexander; your next Lieutenant Governor, Jody Wagner; and your next attorney general, Steve Shannon. That's a good lineup. That is a good lineup.

Now, one of the things I like about Virginia is that you've got a good pattern emerging here—started with Mark Warner. He's now doing an extraordinary job as your Senator, but 8 years ago, he recognized that the old, tired, worn-out politics of division, that wasn't serving the American people well, it wasn't serving the Commonwealth of Virginia very well. He saw a lot of bickering and a lot of arguing and a lot of point-scoring, but not a whole lot of getting things done. So Mark Warner thought to himself, you know what, I'm going to try something different. Let's run a campaign that proves we're all in this together, that there is no northern Virginia or southern Virginia or coastal Virginia, there's one Commonwealth of Virginia.

And he governed in a way that wasn't ideological, it was pragmatic. He focused on what works. He made this incredible Commonwealth work not by pushing people apart, but by bringing people together. He shaped a better kind of politics right here in Virginia, and he made the long-term investments necessary to make Virginia competitive in a global economy, to chart a course to growth and success.

And then you had Tim Kaine, who built and expanded on that legacy. He invested in education so that every child in Virginia could have the tools they need to succeed in this global marketplace. He refused to be distracted

by petty politics, even through tough times, even when folks were calling him names. He remained focused on his vision for Virginia's future.

Audience member. Keep your head up, President Obama!

The President. Oh, don't worry about me.

And because of the tradition that Tim Kaine established and Mark Warner established, Virginia became one of the best managed States in the country, a State that was able to make critical investments even as it was dealing with a fiscal crisis, a State that became better positioned to navigate some of the toughest economic times we've seen in this Nation's history, all because of leadership based on smart decisions and sound investments and renewed civility to our politics. That's what a couple of Democratic Governors brought to the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Now, here's the thing, Virginia: This wasn't just a stroke of good luck. These guys didn't just come out of nowhere. It's because you stood up. You chose that kind of politics. And in one week, you'll have a choice. You can decide to break that tradition of good stewardship, or you can continue with that opportunity.

You'll have the chance to elect somebody who is cut from the very same cloth as Tim Kaine and Mark Warner, somebody who listens to folks even when we don't always agree, somebody who focuses not on short-term politics, but on a practical, long-term vision, and that man is Creigh Deeds. That man is Creigh Deeds.

I said before, look, I would have liked this guy no matter what, because he's got a funny name like Barack Obama. [*Laughter*] So we've both overcome these hardships. [*Laughter*] Served in the State legislature, just like me. So me and him, we're like that.

But keep in mind, this is a man, who for more than two decades as a county prosecutor, as a delegate, as a State senator, has asked for nothing more than just to serve you. When Virginia families needed to make sure their children were safe, he wrote Megan's Law and advocated for the AMBER Alert program. When Mark Warner needed help reforming the budget and controlling spending in the midst of financial crisis, it was Creigh Deeds who he turned to. And even in the face of that crisis, they had the foresight to make record investments in education and lay a foundation for Virginia's long-term growth. When Tim Kaine needed support for a new prekindergarten program that will give Virginia's kids a better start in life, Creigh Deeds was there. Again and again, Creigh has been there for the people of Virginia, and now he needs you to be there for them. You need—he needs you to be there for him.

Now, let's just be straight here. Let's be honest. This is going to be a tough race. I mean, we've got a tough economy. And even if it wasn't a tough economy, it's always tough in Virginia. I don't remember Tim Kaine ever having an easy election. Tim, did you have an easy election? [*Laughter*] We knew this was going to be tough. But even though Virginia is moving in the right direction, this is an evenly split State, pretty independent-minded folks. And that's good, that's healthy. We are at our best when we're engaged in a great debate, where ideas are tested and assumptions are challenged. That's how we strengthen our proposals. That's how we strengthen our government.

But let me—having said all that, let me just be clear: We don't need politicians who are more interested in scoring points than solving problems. We don't need folks who are slick, or try to say one thing and then do another. We don't need politicians who say we should go back to the policies of yesteryear, when it was those very same policies that got us into this mess in the first place. We've had enough of those kind of politicians. We got a whole bunch of those in Washington, DC.

When I showed up after Inauguration, they had left a big mess on the floor. [*Laughter*] So I got a mop, and I started cleaning up their mess. That's okay, I don't mind. But you know, it does bother me when they start saying, "You're not mopping fast enough." [*Laughter*] "You're not holding the mop the right way." [*Laughter*] My attitude is, why don't you grab a mop? Right?

That's what we need, somebody who's committed to moving us forward, not worrying about politics, but doing the work on behalf of hard-working men and women, on behalf of

middle class families, on behalf of the people of Virginia. That's the kind of person Creigh Deeds is.

Creigh understands Virginia faces tough challenges, and solving them will require more than just lip service and political ads. It will require a realistic vision. When you're governing, as Tim will tell you, nothing comes free. Government comes—means you've got to prioritize. You've got to make tough choices. You can't be everything to everybody. You've got to recognize that change doesn't happen overnight.

But if we make the right decisions now, then 10, 15 years down the road, we'll look back and we'll realize we're in a much better place than we otherwise would have been. That's what happened because of the good decisions of Mark Warner and Tim Kaine. Virginia is in a better place. That's what you can expect with Creigh Deeds.

As a consequence of his choices, choices that improve transportation, that give every child a chance in life, that continue the thoughtful probusiness policies in the Warner-Kaine tradition, Virginia will keep moving down the right path. It'll keep making sure that every child in this Commonwealth has access to a world-class education that they need to compete for jobs throughout the country.

Virginia will keep moving toward a secure energy future that frees ourselves from the grip of foreign oil and creates millions of new jobs that pay well right here in America. Virginia will keep moving toward a stronger economy that works for everybody and allows people to retire with some dignity and some respect. And, yes, Virginia will keep moving toward a health system that finally makes quality insurance affordable for Americans who don't have coverage and that gives stability and security to Americans who do, policies that'll finally slow the skyrocketing costs that are crushing families and businesses and our State and Federal budgets. Opportunity in every corner of Virginia, that's what matters to Creigh Deeds. That's what he'll keep fighting for for the people of Virginia, if you give him a chance.

Now, let me say this. I know there are a lot of folks out here who, when they came out in November for my campaign, they turned out to elect Tim Kaine. But you know, these sort of off-year elections, you know, sometimes people say, "Well, you know, I just went last year. I was just volunteering. I was—I already did that knocking on doors." And so maybe people feel a little complacent. Maybe people feel a little cynical, because they're thinking, "Boy, we haven't changed things overnight." I know that there are folks watching who wonder whether or not their investment in their elected leaders can or will actually solve the problems they face.

And people have a right to feel frustrated. Year after year, decade after decade, some of these problems just keep on lingering, and there's still partisan gridlock, whether it's in Richmond or Washington.

But I'm here today because you've got the opportunity to elect a man who represents a better kind of politics. You know, you've got the chance to elect somebody who's got a good heart and a good head and a commitment to work hard on your behalf. And he may not be perfect. My wife reminds me I'm not; she is. Just like our spouses are perfect, but we're not. [*Laughter*] You know, Creigh, sometimes his tie gets a little askew, and, you know, his hair is a little—[*laughter*]—but here's the question is, is that what the people of Virginia are looking for?

Audience members. No!

The President. Are you looking for slick?

Audience members. No!

The President. Or are you looking for somebody who is going to be fighting for you?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Are you going to be looking for somebody—I hope you'll vote based on how good a Governor he is going to be for the people of Virginia. I hope you're going to be voting for the content of his character. I hope that you're going to be voting based on his track record and the fact that he's stood with families like yours for years. That's the kind of Governor that Creigh Deeds is going to be.

You know, when I was—right in the last week of our campaign, back in Iowa—it was

when a lot of you still couldn't pronounce my name—[*laughter*]—a lot of people were still convinced there was no chance that a guy named Barack Hussein Obama could even win a caucus, much less the Presidency.

Audience members. [*Inaudible*]

The President. No, no, no, no—you guys know this. Some of you all didn't think I was going to win. [*Laughter*] Now—everybody says now, "Oh, I knew it all the time."

Audience members. [*Inaudible*]

The President. No, uh-uh. Right before Iowa—I'm not talking about after Iowa, I'm talking about before Iowa, some of you all—see, they're all high-fiving over there. Yes, girlfriend, I saw you. [*Laughter*]

There were a bunch of people who didn't think in that last week we were going to win. When Tim Kaine was running, there were a lot of folks who said, "Well, you know, I don't know, some of his policies are too liberal, and he's too principled. And I'm not sure that he can win in the State of Virginia." Do you remember a week before Tim Kaine—I was out here campaigning for Tim Kaine. A whole bunch of folks said, "I'm not sure he can do it." So now here we are a week away.

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. I'm going to get to that. Hold on a second. [*Laughter*] So now we're a week from Tim Kaine—a week from Creigh Deeds's election, and a lot of people are saying, "Oh, you know, the polls don't look the way we want them to, and I'm not sure it's going to happen," and folks are just kind of staying home.

Listen, let me tell you something. I don't believe in "can't." I don't believe in giving up. I don't believe that we would turn our back on the progress that Tim Kaine has made here in Virginia. I am absolutely confident that we can, if you are willing to work in this last week. If you're willing to make your voice heard in this last week, if you're willing to knock on some doors in this last week and go and talk to your friends and your neighbors and your relatives; go out and get your cousin, who you had to drag to the polls last November, Cousin Pookie. [*Laughter*] You go out and get him, and you tell him, you got to vote again this time.

If you work hard—because I know Creigh is going to work hard—then I promise you this: Not only are we going to elect an outstanding Lieutenant Governor and an outstanding attorney general, but we are going to continue the outstanding legacy in this great Commonwealth, and you're going to be looking at the next Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Creigh Deeds.

Thank you, everybody. Let's get to work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:11 p.m. at Old Dominion University. In his remarks, he referred to John R. Brocerick, president, Old Dominion University; Secretary of Finance Jody C. Wagner and State Delegate Stephen C. Shannon of Virginia.

Statement on Congressional Action on Legislation To Crack Down on Overseas Tax Havens

October 27, 2009

I commend Chairmen Baucus and Rangel and Senator Kerry and Congressman Neal for moving forward on the important task of giving the Government the tools it needs to crack down on Americans hiding their assets in overseas tax havens. A small number of individuals and businesses hide their assets overseas solely in order to shirk their responsibilities, even as the vast majority of hard-working Americans honor the obligations of citizenship and fulfill their responsibilities.

Shortly after taking office, I laid out a set of proposals to crack down on illegal overseas tax evasion. The legislation introduced today would fulfill that promise, putting a stop to billions of dollars worth of abuses. I look forward to working with Congress to turn these proposals into law so that honest Americans no longer shoulder

the burden of the few individuals and businesses that put profit before responsibility.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

Message to the Congress on Continuation on the National Emergency With Respect to Sudan
October 27, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the Sudan emergency is to continue in effect beyond November 3, 2009.

The crisis constituted by the actions and policies of the Government of Sudan that led to the declaration of a national emergency in Executive Order 13067 of November 3, 1997, and the expansion of that emergency in Executive Order 13400 of April 26, 2006, and with respect to which additional steps were taken in Executive Order 13412 of October 13, 2006, has not been resolved. These actions and policies are hostile to U.S. interests and pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Therefore, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to Sudan and maintain in force the sanctions against Sudan to respond to this threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
October 27, 2009.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on Presenting the Congressional Gold Medal to Former Senator Edward W. Brooke
October 28, 2009

Thank you very much. Please be seated. Thank you so much. It is an extraordinary privilege to be here today. And let me begin by acknowledging this distinguished group gathered on the platform: our extraordinary Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi; Majority Leader Harry Reid; Republican leader Mitch McConnell; Majority Leader Steny Hoyer; Republican leader John Boehner; Senator John Kerry; Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton; Representative Patrick Kennedy; my dear friend, Vicki Kennedy; to our honoree, Senator Edward Brooke, his wife, Anne, and family.

It is a great privilege to be here today as we confer the Congressional Gold Medal on a man who's spent his life breaking barriers and bridging divides across this country: Senator Edward Brooke.

Now, with his lifetime of achievement, Ed is no stranger to a good awards ceremony. He's been through a few of these. [*Laughter*] He's won the Bronze Star, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, honorary degrees from 34 colleges and universities, and more. So he's a pro when it comes to getting awards. But I think today's honor bears a unique significance: bestowed by this body of which he was an esteemed Member; presented in this place where he moved the arc of history; surrounded by so many—myself included—who have followed the trail that he blazed.

Ed's journey to this day was, by any measure, an unlikely one. Raised nearby in a neighborhood so fiercely segregated that Black residents needed a note from a White person to pass through; at a time when so many doors of opportunity were closed to African Americans, others might have become angry or disillusioned. They might have concluded that no matter how hard they worked, their horizons would always be limited, so why bother. But not Ed Brooke.

Serving in a segregated Army, barred from facilities at the base where he trained, he fought heroically in Europe, leading a daring daylight attack against a heavily armed enemy. Rejected from Boston's old-line firms despite his success in law school, he established his own practice, handling everything from wills and divorces to real estate and criminal cases.

And when he ran for statewide office in Massachusetts, and one reporter pointed out that he was Black, Republican, and Protestant, seeking office in a White, Democratic, and Catholic State—and also, quote, "a carpetbagger from the South and poor"—Ed was unfazed. It was, to say the least, an improbable profile for the man who would become the first African American State attorney general and the first popularly elected African American Senator.

But that was Ed Brooke's way, to ignore the naysayers, reject the conventional wisdom, and trust that, ultimately, people would judge him on his character, his commitment, his record, and his ideas. He ran for office, as he put it, "to bring people together who had never been together before." And that he did.

I don't know anyone else whose fan base includes Gloria Steinem, Barney Frank, and Ted Kennedy, as well as Mitch McConnell, Mitt Romney, and George W. Bush. [*Laughter*] That's a coalition builder. [*Laughter*] And few have matched his reach across the aisle, from working with Birch Bayh to protect title IX so girls can compete on a level playing field, to sponsoring the Fair Housing Act with Walter Mondale and small-business legislation with Ted Kennedy, one of the many bills he would sponsor with the senior Senator from Massachusetts.

He didn't care whether a bill was popular or politically expedient, Democratic or Republican, he cared about whether it helped people, whether it made a difference in their daily lives. And that's why he fought so hard for Medicare, for mass transit and the minimum wage, for civil rights and women's rights. It's why he became a lifelong advocate for affordable housing, establishing protections that are the standard to this day.

So it's a record that defies the labels and categories for which he had little use and even less patience. When pressed to define himself, he'd offer phrases like "creative moderate," or "a liberal with a conservative bent." But in truth, Ed Brooke's career was animated not by a faith in any particular party or ideology, but rather, by a faith in the people he served.

Ed always got to see the best in people, because that was the effect he had. Maybe it was his old-fashioned manners, his unfailing courtesy and warmth. Maybe it was his charm and charisma, known to melt even the staunchest adversary. Or maybe it was his genuine interest in people's stories, the way he listened to their concerns and worked to ease their struggles. Whatever it was, even if people didn't fully agree with him, they saw how hard he fought for them and how much he respected them, and they respected him back. They rose to meet his esteem for them. Around Ed, people wanted to be their better selves.

Over the years, he made an impression on just about everyone he encountered, including a young Congressman named John F. Kennedy, whom he met back in 1952. The two men had a lively conversation, and as they parted ways, the future President said, "You know, you ought to be a Democrat." [*Laughter*] And Ed smiled and replied, "You know, you ought to be a Republican." [*Laughter*]

It was a sentiment that many in my party would share, including the President's brother, our dear friend, Ted Kennedy. While Ted campaigned vigorously for Ed's Democratic opponent, the two later became lifelong friends. And four decades later, Ted would campaign even more vigorously to secure Ed's nomination for this medal.

So while we grace Senator Brooke with his—this honor today, perhaps a better tribute to him would be to embrace that spirit: to compete aggressively at the polls, but then work selflessly together to serve the Nation we love. To look for the best in each other, to give each other the benefit of the doubt, and to remember that we're here for a purpose far greater than the sum of our own hopes, needs, and ambitions. That's the legacy of our friend, Senator Edward Brooke. And may we each do our part to carry it forward.

Thank you. God bless you. Congratulations, Senator Brooke. And God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:20 a.m. at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to activist Gloria M. Steinem; former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts; and former Sens. Birch E. Bayh and Walter F. Mondale.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With the Cochairs of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board and Senior Members of the Intelligence Community

October 28, 2009

The President. Thank you, everybody. Today I am proud to announce the newest members of my national security team. I just met with them in the Oval Office, and I'm very pleased to have two extraordinary Americans. Senators Chuck Hagel and David Boren have agreed to serve as Cochairmen of my Intelligence Advisory Board, otherwise known as PIAB.

Now, since Dwight Eisenhower, Presidents have relied on the advisory board for advice on intelligence matters, and under Chuck and Dave's leadership, I will be looking for the board to provide me with objective, independent, and nonpartisan counsel as we work to strengthen our intelligence community and our national security.

And that's why we're joined today by my DNI, Director of National Intelligence, Denny Blair, and leaders from all 16 of our agencies involved with intelligence gathering. They represent countless men and women, uniformed and civilian, who work, often in obscurity, to keep our country safe.

Now, in recent months, we've seen some of their successes, in partnership with law enforcement and homeland security, real progress against Al Qaida and its extremist allies. And we thank those behind these suggestion—these successes, and we pledge to continue to provide the utmost support to them. Having Chuck Hagel and Dave Boren next to me, I think, is going to help us do an even better job.

Chuck understands that accurate and timely intelligence is essential for effective foreign policy. He served for many years as—on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and 6 years on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. And I came to appreciate his sound judgments in our travels together overseas, including to Iraq and Afghanistan.

He also understands, from personal experience, the need to protect our troops and provide them with the best possible intelligence. During Vietnam, Sergeant Hagel served as an infantry squad leader, along with his brother, where they both were wounded twice. And I thank Chuck for his lifetime of service and his willingness to serve once again.

David is a longtime champion of intelligence reform. He was the longest serving chairman in the history of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. In that time, he authored the legislation that created an independent inspector general at the CIA and major reforms to our oversight of covert actions.

David was also the leading force behind legislation that has encouraged thousands of American college students to study abroad to deepen their knowledge of the world and cultures. And I thank David for agreeing to serve in this capacity, even as he continues to lead

the University of Oklahoma. And we are sorry about Bradford's shoulder.

Senator David L. Boren. Thank you. [*Laughter*] Thank you, sir.

The President. I look forward to working with Chuck and David in their new roles. They will report to me, they will have my full support, and they will have the full cooperation of my National Security Council staff and the organizations represented here.

We are off to a good start with this meeting by welcoming the press, which past advisory boards have rarely done. Now, that's a reflection of my administration's commitment to transparency and open government, even, when appropriate, on matters of national security and intelligence.

In the near future, I'll be naming additional members to the board. I look forward to Chuck, David, and these men and women around the table for their candid and unvarnished advice on the quality and accuracy of our intelligence and the effectiveness of our intelligence community.

Our work is clear. The organizations represented here have made real progress in recent years. But we all agree that more needs to be done to improve the collection of intelligence, to ensure that analysis reaches senior decisionmakers in a timely way, and to provide strong oversight to ensure that our intelligence activities are consistent with our democratic values and with the rule of law.

And the American people—and the men and women of our intelligence community as well—deserve nothing less. As I've said in my recent visits to the National Counterterrorism Center and the Joint Terrorism Task Force, we are extraordinarily grateful to them for the hard work, without any fanfare, that they do to keep the American people safe.

That's what I'm committed to doing as President, and that's why I want to again thank Senators Hagel and Boren for agreeing to serve in this capacity. I think they are going to be a invaluable resource to all of us sitting around the table.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:41 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Tom Hagel, brother of Sen. Charles T. Hagel; and Sam Bradford, quarterback, University of Oklahoma Sooners.

Remarks on Signing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010

October 28, 2009

Thank you. Please, everybody, be seated. Good afternoon. I have often said that meeting our greatest challenges would require not only changing policies in Washington but changing the way business is done in Washington, that it would require a Government that's more efficient and effective and less influenced by lobbyists and parochial politics. And I'm pleased to say that when it comes to the defense bill I'm about to sign into law, we've taken some important steps towards that goal.

I want to acknowledge my outstanding Vice President, Joe Biden. Attorney General Eric Holder is here. And all Members of Congress who are joining us here today, thank you very much for your outstanding work. You can give Members of Congress a round of applause as well.

As Commander in Chief, I will always do whatever it takes to keep the American people safe, to defend this Nation. And that's why this bill provides for the best military in the history of the world. It reaffirms our commitment to our brave men and women in uniform and our wounded warriors. It expands family leave rights for the family members of our troops and veterans. And it makes investments in the capabilities necessary to meet 21st-century challenges.

But I have always rejected the notion that we have to waste billions of dollars of taxpayer money to keep this Nation secure. In fact, I think that wasting these dollars makes us less

secure. And that's why we have passed a defense bill that eliminates some of the waste and inefficiency in our defense process, reforms that will better protect our Nation, better protect our troops, and save taxpayers tens of billions of dollars.

Now, at the outset, let me just say that this effort would not have been possible without an extraordinary Secretary of Defense. And so I want to thank publicly Bob Gates for his service to our Nation.

Having served under eight Presidents of both parties, this is a man who understands that our defense budget isn't about politics, it's about the security of our country, and who knows that every dollar wasted is a dollar we can't spend to care for our troops or protect the homeland.

And over the last several months, he took that fight to Congress. He challenged conventional thinking, and he emerged with several critical victories. So on behalf of the American people, I want to thank you, Bob, for your extraordinary efforts.

Now, Bob couldn't have been successful had it not been for the next person I want to introduce, Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He provided wise counsel and stood with us in our efforts to initiate reform, even though it probably occasionally caused some heartburn inside of the Pentagon as well, because change is hard. And so I'm very grateful for his leadership and excellent work. Please give Mike a big round of applause.

And finally, I want to thank the Members of Congress, particularly Senators Carl Levin and John McCain and Congressmen Ike Skelton and Buck McKeon. As the chairmen and ranking members of their respective committees, they did an outstanding job.

Now, this bill isn't perfect. This bill is an important step forward, but it's just a first step. There's still more waste we need to cut. There are still more fights that we need to win. Changing the culture in Washington will take time and sustained effort. And that's why Secretary Gates and I will continue waging these battles in the months and years ahead.

But I will say that when Secretary Gates and I first proposed going after some of these wasteful projects, there were a lot of people in this town who didn't think it was possible, who were certain we were going to lose, who were certain that we would get steamrolled, who argued that the special interests were too entrenched and that Washington was simply too set in its ways.

And so I think it's important to note today we have proven them wrong. Today we're putting an end to some wasteful projects that lawmakers have tried to kill for years. And we're doing this because Secretary Gates and I both know that we can't build the 21st-century military we need unless we fundamentally reform the way our defense establishment does business. The Government Accountability Office, the GAO, has looked into 96 major defense projects from the last year and found cost overruns that totaled $296 billion, an amount of money that would have paid our troops' salaries and provided benefits for their families for more than a year.

And we all know where this kind of waste comes from: indefensible, no-bid contracts that cost taxpayers billions and make contractors rich; special interests and their exotic projects that are years behind schedule and billions over budget; entrenched lobbyists pushing weapons that even our military says it doesn't want and doesn't need; the impulse in Washington to win political points back home by building things that we don't need at costs we can't afford. This waste would be unacceptable at any time, but at a time when we're fighting two wars and facing a serious deficit, it's inexcusable, it's unconscionable. It's an affront to the American people and to our troops, and it has to stop.

And already I've put an end to unnecessary no-bid contracts. I signed bipartisan legislation to reform defense procurement so weapons systems don't spin out of control. And even as we made critical investments in the equipment and weapons our troops do need, we're eliminating tens of billions of dollars in waste we don't need. So no longer will we be spending nearly $2 billion to buy more F–22 fighter jets that the Pentagon says they don't need. This

bill also terminates troubled and massively over budget programs such as the Future Combat Systems, the Airborne Lasers, the Combat Search and Rescue helicopter, and a new Presidential helicopter that costs nearly as much as Air Force One. I won't be flying on that.

At the same time, we accelerated or increased weapons programs needed to confront real and growing threats: the Joint Strike Fighter, the Littoral Combat Ship, and more helicopters and reconnaissance support for our troops at the front.

And this bill also reduces waste and fraud in our contracting system, as well as our reliance on private contractors for jobs that Federal employees have the expertise and the training to do.

So today I'm pleased to say that we have proved that change is possible. It may not come quickly, or all at once, but if you push hard enough, it does come eventually.

Now, speaking of that, there is one more long-awaited change contained within this legislation that I'll be talking about a little more later today. After more than a decade of opposition and delay, we've passed inclusive hate crimes legislation to help protect our citizens from violence based on what they look like, who they love, how they pray, or who they are.

I promised Judy Shepard, when she saw me in the Oval Office, that this day would come, and I'm glad that she and her husband Dennis could join us for this event. I'm also honored to have the family of the late Senator Ted Kennedy, who fought so hard for this legislation. And Vicki and Patrick, Kara, everybody who's here, I just want you all to know how proud we are of the work that Ted did to help this day—make this day possible. So—and thank you for joining us here today.

So with that, I'm going to sign this piece of legislation. Thank you all for doing a great job. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:42 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Dennis and Judy Shepard, parents of Matthew Shepard, who was attacked and killed in October 1998; and Victoria R. Kennedy, wife, Patrick J. Kennedy, son, and Kara Kennedy Allen, daughter, of former Sen. Edward M. Kennedy. S. 1390, approved October 28, was assigned Public Law No. 111–84.

Remarks on the Enactment of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act

October 28, 2009

Hello, everybody. Good to see you. Yes. Thank you so much, and welcome to the White House. There are several people here that I want to just make mention of because they helped to make today possible: we've got Attorney General Eric Holder and the Department of Justice crowd; a champion of this legislation and a great Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi; my dear friend, senior Senator from the great State of Illinois, Dick Durbin; the outstanding chairman of Armed Services, Carl Levin; Senator Arlen Specter; chairman of the Judiciary Committee in the House, Representative John Conyers; Representative Barney Frank; Representative Tammy Baldwin; Representative Jerry Nadler; Representative Jared Polis; all the Members of Congress who are here today. We thank you.

Mr. David Bohnett and Mr. Tom Gregory and the David Bohnett Foundation—they are partners for this reception—thank you so much, guys, for helping to host this; and finally and most importantly, because these were really the spearheads of this effort, Dennis, Judy, and Logan Shepard, as well as Betty Byrd Boatner and Louvon Harris, sisters of James Byrd, Jr. To all the activists, all the organizers, all the people who helped make this day happen, thank you for your years of advocacy and activism, pushing and protesting that made this victory possible.

You know, as a nation we've come far on the journey towards a more perfect union. And today, we've taken another step forward. This

afternoon, I signed into law the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

This is the culmination of a struggle that has lasted more than a decade. Time and again, we faced opposition. Time and again, the measure was defeated or delayed. Time and again, we've been reminded of the difficulty of building a nation in which we're all free to live and love as we see fit. But the cause endured and the struggle continued, waged by the family of Matthew Shepard, by the family of James Byrd, by folks who held vigils and led marches, by those who rallied and organized and refused to give up, by the late Senator Ted Kennedy who fought so hard for this legislation and all who toiled for years to reach this day.

Now, you understand that we must stand against crimes that are meant not only to break bones, but to break spirits, not only to inflict harm, but to instill fear. You understand that the rights afforded every citizen under our Constitution mean nothing if we do not protect those rights, both from unjust laws and violent acts. And you understand how necessary this law continues to be.

In the most recent year for which we have data, the FBI reported roughly 7,600 hate crimes in this country. Over the past 10 years, there were more than 12,000 reported hate crimes based on sexual orientation alone. And we will never know how many incidents were never reported at all.

And that's why, through this law, we will strengthen the protections against crimes based on the color of your skin, the faith in your heart, or the place of your birth. We will finally add Federal protections against crimes based on gender, disability, gender identity, or sexual orientation. And prosecutors will have new tools to work with States in order to prosecute to the fullest those who would perpetrate such crimes, because no one in America should ever be afraid to walk down the street holding the hands of the person they love. No one in America should be forced to look over their shoulder because of who they are or because they live with a disability.

At root, this isn't just about our laws; this is about who we are as a people. This is about whether we value one another, whether we embrace our differences rather than allowing them to become a source of animus. It's hard for any of us to imagine the mindset of someone who would kidnap a young man and beat him to within an inch of his life, tie him to a fence, and leave him for dead. It's hard for any of us to imagine the twisted mentality of those who'd offer a neighbor a ride home, attack him, chain him to the back of a truck, and drag him for miles until he finally died.

But we sense where such cruelty begins: the moment we fail to see in another our common humanity, the very moment when we fail to recognize in a person the same fears and hopes, the same passions and imperfections, the same dreams that we all share.

We have for centuries strived to live up to our founding ideal of a nation where all are free and equal and able to pursue their own version of happiness. Through conflict and tumult, through the morass of hatred and prejudice, through periods of division and discord we have endured and grown stronger and fairer and freer. And at every turn, we've made progress not only by changing laws but by changing hearts, by our willingness to walk in another's shoes, by our capacity to love and accept even in the face of rage and bigotry.

In April of 1968, just 1 week after the assassination of Martin Luther King, as our Nation mourned in grief and shuddered in anger, President Lyndon Johnson signed landmark civil rights legislation. This was the first time we enshrined into law Federal protections against crimes motivated by religious or racial hatred, the law on which we build today.

As he signed his name, at a difficult moment for our country, President Johnson said that through this law "the bells of freedom ring out a little louder." That is the promise of America. Over the sound of hatred and chaos, over the din of grief and anger, we can still hear those ideals, even when they are faint, even when some would try to drown them out. At our best we seek to make sure those ideals can be heard and felt by Americans everywhere. That work did not end in 1968. It certainly does not end today. But because of the efforts of the folks in this room, particularly

those family members who are standing behind me, we can be proud that that bell rings even louder now and each day grows louder still.

So thank you very much. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:45 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to David C. Bohnett, chairman, David Bohnett Foundation, and his partner Tom Gregory; Dennis and Judy Shepard, parents, and Logan Shepard, brother, of Matthew Shepard, who was attacked and killed in October 1998; and Betty Byrd Boatner and Louvon Harris, sisters of James Byrd, Jr., who was attacked and killed in June 1998. H.R. 2647, approved October 28, which includes Division E, the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, was assigned Public Law No. 111–83.

Remarks on Small Business and Health Care Reform
October 29, 2009

Good afternoon, everybody. Please, have a seat. Before I begin, I want to just acknowledge two people who are working extraordinarily hard on behalf of small businesses. First of all, the Administrator of our Small Business Administration, Karen Mills, is here. The other individual who is on his way and will be here in a hot second, but we didn't want to keep everybody waiting, is a dear friend of mine, a great former Governor of Virginia, is now the Senator from the great State of Virginia and a huge supporter of small business and trying to figure out how to help all of you control your costs, and that's Senator Mark Warner. So when he comes in, please give him a smile.

I asked you here today to talk about health insurance reform and why it's so critical to the success of small businesses across our country. But before I do, let me talk a minute just briefly about the new economic numbers that were released this morning.

I am gratified that our economy grew in the third quarter of this year. We've come a long way since the first 3 months of 2009, when our economy shrunk by an alarming 6.4 percent. In fact, the 3.5-percent growth in the third quarter is the largest 3-month gain we have seen in 2 years. This is obviously welcome news and an affirmation that this recession is abating and the steps we've taken have made a difference.

But I also know that we've got a long way to go to fully restore our economy and recover from what's been the longest and deepest downturn since the Great Depression. And while this report today represents real progress, the benchmark I use to measure the strength of our economy is not just whether our GDP is growing, but whether we're creating jobs, whether families are having an easier time paying their bills, whether our businesses are hiring and doing well. And that's what I'm here to talk with you about today.

I know many of you have come from different corners of our country to be here, and looking out at all of you, I'm reminded of the extraordinary diversity of America's small businesses. You're owners of coffee shops and diners and hotels; you're florists, exterminators, builders. Each of your shops and firms reflects different passions and different ideas and different skills.

But what you share is a willingness to pursue those passions, take a chance on those ideas, and make the most of those skills. What you share is an entrepreneurial spirit, a tireless work ethic, and a simple hope for something better that lies at the heart of the American ideal. Businesses like yours are the engines of job growth in America. Over the past decade and a half, America's small businesses have created 65 percent of all new jobs in this country. And more than half of all Americans working in the private sector are either employed by a small business or own one.

Now, even in good times, starting a business, as all of you know, is not easy. It takes moxie, it takes gumption, it takes ingenuity, and failure is often more likely than success. But I don't have to tell you that it's been particularly difficult over the past few years. From the middle of 2007 through the end of 2008, small businesses lost 2.4 million jobs. Thousands have shut their

doors altogether. And because of the credit crunch, banks have shrunk back from lending, making it harder to get loans to branch out or finance your inventories or maybe even to make payroll. Maybe you've had to forgo raises. Maybe you've had to do the unthinkable and lay off friends or family.

So we know how tough times have been for small businesses. That's why I made sure the Recovery Act included a number of measures to help small businesses weather this economic storm. We've put a tax cut—a tax cut, not a tax hike—a tax cut into the pockets of the vast majority of small-business owners and employees. We've supported nearly 65,000 [35,000]* loans to small businesses, more than $13 billion in new lending. More than 1,200 banks and credit unions that had stopped issuing SBA loans when the financial crisis hit are lending again today, and just last week, we proposed increasing the cap on what are called 7(a) and 504 loans, some of the loans most frequently handed out by the SBA.

But given the enormous problems small businesses and all Americans are facing today, we're aware that these steps are by no means enough. If we're serious about strengthening small businesses, if we're serious about creating a climate where our entrepreneurs can succeed, if we're serious about giving you the chance to prosper and grow, I believe, this administration firmly believes, that we need to pass health insurance reform in the United States of America.

Now, few have a bigger stake in what happens than all of you. Few have a bigger stake than the men and women who own a small business, work at a small business, or rely on someone who does. Few have a bigger stake in what happens because few are struggling more under the status quo. You all know the story.

We all know that family premiums have skyrocketed more than 130 percent over the past decade. They have more than doubled. But small businesses have been hit harder than most. A story in the paper just the other day said that many small businesses may see their premiums rise about 15 percent over the coming year, twice the rate they rose last year. And in part because small businesses pay higher administrative costs than larger ones, your employees pay up to 18 percent more in premiums for the very same health insurance. In one national survey, nearly three-quarters of small businesses that don't offer benefits cited high premiums as the reason, and that's not surprising.

The bottom line is that too many Americans like you can't afford to build the kinds of businesses you'd been hoping to build. Too many budding entrepreneurs can't afford to take a gamble on a smart idea because they can't give up the health insurance they get in their current job. Too many of you not only can't afford to provide health insurance to your employees, too many of you are having a tough time just affording health insurance for yourselves. That's bad for our economy, it's bad for our country, and that's what will change when health insurance reform becomes law.

Just this morning the House of Representatives released its version of health reform legislation, and I want to commend Nancy Pelosi and the Democratic Caucus for their leadership in achieving this critical milestone. They forged a strong consensus that represents a historic step forward. This bill includes reforms that will finally help make quality insurance affordable. Importantly, this bill is also fully paid for and will reduce the deficit in the long term.

Now, there's no doubt that this legislation and the legislation that's being drafted in the Senate would benefit millions of small businesses. It's being written with the interests of Americans like you and your employees in mind. And yet there are those who have a vested interest in the status quo who are claiming otherwise, and they're using misleading figures and disingenuous arguments. So I want to try to explain as clearly as I can exactly what health reform would mean for small-business owners like you and the workers you employ.

The first thing I want to make clear is that if you are happy with the insurance plan that you have right now, if the costs you're paying and

* White House correction.

the benefits you're getting are what you want them to be, then you can keep offering that same plan. Nobody will make you change it. What we will do is make the coverage that you're currently providing more affordable by offering a tax credit to small businesses that are trying to do the right thing and provide coverage for their employees. Under the House and Senate bills, millions of small businesses would be eligible for a tax credit of up to 50 percent of their premiums. That's in the legislation that's already been proposed.

We'll also make your coverage more stable and more secure. Right now if just one of your workers falls seriously ill, it could spell disaster for your entire business. You could see your premiums shoot up and you could face a painful choice: Do you eat the costs and ask your workers to contribute more? Do you seek another insurance plan, without any guarantee that you'll be able to find one that's affordable? Or do you just scale back benefits or drop coverage altogether?

I don't think that you should have to make that choice in the United States of America. Under health insurance reform, we put an end to the days when an insurance company could use one worker's illness to justify jacking up premiums for everybody. We'll crack down on excessive overhead charges by setting strong standards on how much of your premium can go towards administrative costs and requiring insurers to give you a refund, if they violate those standards. It'll be against the law for insurance companies to deny you coverage because of a preexisting condition, and it will be against the law for insurance companies to drop your coverage when you get sick or water it down when you need it the most.

They'll no longer be able to place some arbitrary cap on the amount of coverage you can receive in a given year or a lifetime. If you get your insurance through your employer, we'll change the cutoff on how old your kids can be to remain on your plan; we'll raise that to 26 years old. We'll place a limit on how much you can be charged for out-of-pocket expenses. And insurance companies will be required to cover, with no extra charge, routine checkups and preventive care, like mammograms and colonoscopies, because there's no reason we shouldn't be catching diseases like breast cancer and colon cancer before they get worse and cost more money. That makes sense, it saves money, and it saves lives.

So that's what we'll do for all the small businesses that have insurance, that are currently providing insurance. And for all the small businesses that can't afford to provide insurance right now and small-business owners who can't even afford to get coverage themselves, we'll finally make quality coverage affordable. And here's how we'll do it.

One of the biggest problems in our health care system right now is if you're a small-business owner or if you're self-employed, you often have such a small number of workers that insurance companies aren't all that interested in your business. It's basic economics. You don't have a lot of leverage as a small customer. And as a result, you end up paying higher costs than big businesses that can get better deals because they've got more workers, they got more purchasing power.

So what we'll do is to set up what we're calling an exchange that will pool small businesses together. And that will mean it's not just you bargaining with insurance companies, it's you and many other small-business owners and self-employed individuals all across the country. And with all that additional leverage, you'll be able to get better deals than you could have ever received on your own. In fact, small businesses that choose one of the plans in this exchange could save 25 percent on their premiums by 2016, only 2 years after the exchange has been set up.

And we'll also offer tax credits to make insurance even more affordable for millions of small businesses. So meanwhile, by expanding coverage for more Americans, we're going to help eliminate the hidden tax of more than a thousand dollars that the average worker is paying to cover the medical expenses of the uninsured.

Now, nothing's free, and it's true that when reform becomes law, businesses of a certain size who do not offer their workers health care coverage may be required to contribute to the costs, and that makes a lot of small-business owners nervous. Opponents of reform have

tried to say that you'd be subject to this penalty and it could potentially drive up your costs.

But here are the facts, because this has been analyzed repeatedly. About 90 percent—90 percent of all small businesses, regardless of what version of this plan you're talking about that's currently going through Congress—90 percent of all businesses would be exempt from this requirement. So if your business is anything like the vast majority of small businesses out there, this requirement simply won't apply to you, because I don't think it's fair to impose a penalty on small businesses that are already operating at very narrow margins.

So that's what health insurance reform would mean for you and for all our small businesses. It would reduce your costs. It would prevent small-business owners from facing exorbitant rate hikes. It will make coverage affordable for all small businesses that can't afford it right now. And if you're providing health insurance to your employees, it gives you more predictability, more security, more stability.

It will help remove the worry that if you have the courage to strike out on your own and open a business, you'll be doomed from the start. It will help give entrepreneurs and all Americans the assurance of knowing they won't go broke when they get sick. It will help ensure that no small-business owner in America has to choose between being a successful employer and an employer who cares deeply about the well being of his employees or her employees. It will help us be the kind of country we know ourselves to be.

So what's at stake isn't just the success of our businesses or the strength of our economy or even the health of our people. What's at stake is that most American of ideas: that this is a place where you can make it if you try, where you can be your own boss, where the only limits to what you can achieve are your smarts, your savvy, your dreams, your willingness to work hard, where you can pass on to your children a better life than you inherited.

That's what's at stake; that's what we're fighting for. And I'm absolutely confident that if we do what has to be done, if we can build an economy that works for all Americans, if we can promote innovation and foster growth and build a better health care system that is not a drag on each and every one of you, then not only will we ease the burden on entrepreneurs, not only will we give our small businesses a huge boost, not only will we produce the kind of growth we so desperately need in this country, but we'll secure the blessings of America for our children and our grandchildren.

That's what we're fighting for. I need your help to make it happen. Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:51 a.m. in the South Court at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore and an Exchange With Reporters
October 29, 2009

President Obama. Hello, everybody. I just want to welcome the Minister Mentor of Singapore. This is one of the legendary figures of Asia in the 20th and 21st centuries. He is somebody who helped to trigger the Asian economic miracle. Singapore has been an outstanding friend and ally of the United States for many, many years, and so I am very much looking forward to the opportunity to hearing from the Minister Mentor his views on the evolving situation in Asia, as I prepare for my upcoming trip both to Singapore and to other key nations in the region.

And so I'm very grateful that he took the time. Welcome. And on behalf of the American people, we want to say thank you to the people of Singapore for being such outstanding friends.

Minister Mentor Lee. Thank you, Mr. President, for those very warm words. I'm

especially privileged to see you at a time of renewal and change in America and during a period of transition, where the world order is changing. And I look forward to hear your views on how you see the world evolving in a manner and America's role in it, which is crucial to the stability and prosperity of East Asia.

President Obama. Thank you very much.

All right, everybody.

The President's Visit to Dover Air Force Base

Q. Sir, can we ask about your visit to Dover Air Force Base last night? Will it influence your decision on Afghanistan?

President Obama. Well, obviously, it was a sobering reminder of the extraordinary sacrifices that our young men and women in uniform are engaging in every single day, not only our troops but their families as well. And so Michelle and I are constantly mindful of those sacrifices.

And obviously, the burden that both our troops and our families bear in any wartime situation is going to bear on how I see these conflicts. And it is something that I think about each and every day.

All right?

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:47 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Health Care Reform Legislation

October 29, 2009

I congratulate the House of Representatives on the introduction of the "Affordable Health Care for America Act," another critical milestone in the effort to reform our health care system.

This legislation is the product of unprecedented cooperation and countless hours of hard work by Speaker Pelosi, Chairmen Waxman, Rangel, and Miller, Congressman Dingell, and scores of House Members who share my conviction that we can't wait another year for health insurance reform. They have forged a strong consensus that represents a historic step forward.

The House legislation includes critical reforms to the insurance industry so that Americans will no longer have to worry that they will be denied coverage or that their coverage will be dropped or watered down when they need it most. I'm also pleased that the bill includes a public option offered in an exchange. As I've said throughout this process, a public option that competes with private insurers is the best way to ensure choice and competition that are so badly needed in today's market. And the House bill clearly meets two of the fundamental criteria I have set out: It is fully paid for and will reduce the deficit in the long term.

While we know there will—may—more steps and much spirited debate before a bill reaches my desk, I congratulate the House on their work so far, and I'm confident that Members will continue to work together to deliver meaningful reform for America's families and businesses.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

Statement on Czech Republic's National Day

October 28, 2009

On behalf of the American people, I extend my warmest wishes to those celebrating the Czech Republic's National Day. Whether they are Americans that trace their roots back to the Czech Republic, or those living there now, the United States and the Czech Republic are close allies and essential partners. Our nations share a history of struggle on behalf of liberty and

democracy, and our people have forged a strong and lasting partnership that is grounded in these shared values. Czech Americans trace their roots back to before our country was founded, they have enriched our communities and our country, and they continue to play a key role in shaping the direction of our Nation.

NOTE: This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 30.

Statement on the Anniversary of the Founding of Turkey
October 29, 2009

The people of the United States join the people of Turkey in celebrating the anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Turkey. The friendship between our nation is strong, and our alliance is enduring. More than 50 years ago, the United States and Turkey began a partnership based on shared values and mutual respect, a partnership and friendship that has deepened over the years as we have overcome many shared challenges. Turkish Americans help to forge the bonds that join our nations in friendship, and they continue to contribute to our society in a wide range of field, including arts, athletics, education, business, medicine, and science.

NOTE: This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 30.

Remarks on Signing the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Extension Act of 2009
October 30, 2009

The President. Good morning, everybody.

Audience members. Good morning.

The President. We often speak about AIDS as if it's going on somewhere else, and for good reason. This is a virus that has touched lives and decimated communities around the world, particularly in Africa. But often overlooked is the fact that we face a serious HIV/AIDS epidemic of our own, right here in Washington, DC, and right here in the United States of America. And today we are taking two important steps forward in the fight that we face here at home.

It has been nearly three decades since this virus first became known. But for years, we refused to recognize it for what it was. It was coined a "gay disease." Those who had it were viewed with suspicion. There was a sense among some that people afflicted by AIDS somehow deserved their fate and that it was acceptable for our Nation to look the other way.

A number of events and advances over the years have broadened our understanding of this cruel illness. One of them came in 1984, when a 13-year-old boy from central Indiana contracted HIV/AIDS from a transfusion. Doctors assured people that Ryan White posed no risk to his classmates or his community, but ignorance was still widespread. People didn't yet understand or believe that the virus couldn't be spread by casual contact. Parents protested Ryan's attendance in class. Some even pulled their kids out of school. Things got so bad that the White family had to ultimately move to another town.

It would have been easy for Ryan and his family to stay quiet and to fight the illness in private. But what Ryan showed was the same courage and strength that so many HIV-positive activists have shown over the years and shown around—show around the world today. And because he did, we didn't just become more informed about HIV/AIDS, we began to take action to fight it.

In 1990, the year Ryan passed away, two great friends and unlikely political allies, Ted Kennedy and then Orrin Hatch, came together and introduced the Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency Act, the CARE Act, which was later named after Ryan.

In a few minutes, I'm going to sign the fourth reauthorization of the Ryan White CARE Act. Now, in the past, policy differences have made reauthorizations of this program divisive and controversial. That didn't happen this year. And for that, the Members of Congress that are here today deserve extraordinary credit for passing this bill in the bipartisan manner that it deserves: Tom Harkin and Mike Enzi in the Senate, we are grateful to you for your extraordinary work; Speaker Pelosi, who's always leading the charge on so many issues; Frank Pallone, Jr., Joe Barton, Barbara Lee, and Donna Christensen in the House, thank you for your extraordinary work. Oh, don't worry, I'm getting to Henry. [*Laughter*] Nancy is always looking out for Members—[*laughter*]—but we've got a special section for Henry.

And Chairman Henry Waxman, who began holding hearings on AIDS in 1982, before there was even a name for AIDS, was leading here in Washington to make sure that this got the informed attention that it deserved and who led the House in passing the original Ryan White legislation in 1990.

I also want to acknowledge the HIV community for crafting a consensus document that did so much to help move this process forward. Some of the advocates so important to this legislation are with us here today: Ernest Hopkins from Cities Advocating for Emergency AIDS Relief; Frank Oldham, Jr., president and CEO of the National Association of People with AIDS; and Julie Scofield, executive director of the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors.

And I'm especially honored that Ryan White's mother, Jeanne White-Ginder, is here today. For 25 years, Jeanne had an immeasurable impact in helping ramp up America's response to this epidemic. While we lost Ryan at too young an age, Jeanne's efforts have extended the lives and saved the lives of so many others. And we are so appreciative to you. Thank you.

You know, over the past 19 years, this legislation has evolved from an emergency response into a comprehensive national program for the care and support of Americans living with HIV/AIDS. It helps communities that are most severely affected by this epidemic and often least served by our health care system, including minority communities, the LGBT community, rural communities, and the homeless. It's often the only option for the uninsured and the underinsured. And it provides lifesaving medical services to more than half a million Americans every year in every corner of the country.

It's helped us to open a critical front on the ongoing battle against HIV/AIDS. But let me be clear: This is a battle that's far from over, and it's a battle that all of us need to do our part to join. AIDS may no longer be the leading killer of Americans ages 25 to 44, as it once was, but there are still 1.1 million people living with HIV/AIDS in the United States, and more than 56,000 new infections occur every single year.

Some communities still experience unacceptably high rates of infection. Gay men make up 2 or 3 percent of the population, but more than half of all new cases. African Americans make up roughly half of all new cases. Nearly half of all new cases now occur in the South. And a staggering 7 percent of Washington, DC's residents between the ages of 40 and 49 live with HIV/AIDS, and the epidemic here isn't as severe as it is in several other U.S. cities.

So tackling this epidemic will take far more aggressive approaches than we've seen in the past, not only from our Federal Government but also State and local governments, from local community organizations, and from places of worship.

But it will also take an effort to end the stigma that has stopped people from getting tested, that has stopped people from facing their own illness, and that has sped the spread of this disease for far too long. A couple of years ago, Michelle and I were in Africa, and we tried to combat the stigma when we were in Kenya by taking a public HIV/AIDS test. And I'm proud to announce today we're about to take another step towards ending that stigma.

Twenty-two years ago, in a decision rooted in fear rather than fact, the United States instituted a travel ban on entry into the country for people living with HIV/AIDS. Now, we talk about reducing the stigma of this disease, yet we've treated a visitor living with it as a threat. We lead the world when it comes to helping

stem the AIDS pandemic, yet we are one of only a dozen countries that still bar people from HIV from entering our own country.

If we want to be the global leader in combating HIV/AIDS, we need to act like it. And that's why on Monday my administration will publish a final rule that eliminates the travel ban effective just after the New Year. Congress and President Bush began this process last year, and they ought to be commended for it. We are finishing the job. It's a step that will encourage people to get tested and get treatment, it's a step that will keep families together, and it's a step that will save lives.

We are continuing the work of crafting a coordinated, measurable national HIV/AIDS strategy to stem and suppress this epidemic. I'm pleased to report that the Office of National AIDS Policy, led by Jeffrey Crowley, has already held 8 in a series of 14 community discussions in cities across the country. They've brought together faith-based organizations and businesses, schools and research institutions, people living with HIV and concerned citizens, gathering ideas on how to target a national response that effectively reduces HIV infections, improves access to treatment, and eliminates health disparities. And we are encouraged by the energy, the enthusiasm, and great ideas that we've collected so far.

We can't give Ryan White back to Jeanne, back to his mom. But what we can do—what the legislation that I'm about to sign has done for nearly 20 years—is honor the courage that he and his family showed. What we can do is to take more action and educate more people. What we can do is keep fighting each and every day until we eliminate this disease from the face of the Earth.

So with that, let me sign this bill.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ernest Hopkins, chair of the board of directors, Communities Advocating Emergency AIDS Relief (CAEAR) Coalition. S. 1793, approved October 30, was assigned Public Law No. 111–87.

The President's Weekly Address
October 31, 2009

Each week, I've spoken with you about the challenges we face as a nation and the path we must take to meet them. And the truth is, over the past 10 months, I've often had to report distressing news during what has been a difficult time for our country. But today I am pleased to offer some better news that while not cause for celebration is certainly reason to believe that we are moving in the right direction.

On Thursday, we received a report on our Gross Domestic Product, or GDP. This is an important measure of our economy as a whole, one that tells us how much we are producing and how much businesses and families are earning. We learned that the economy grew for the first time in more than a year and faster than at any point in the previous 2 years. So while we have a long way to go before we return to prosperity, and there will undoubtedly be ups and downs along the road, it's also true that we've come a long way. It's easy to forget that it was only several months ago that the economy was shrinking rapidly and many economists feared another great depression.

Now, economic growth is no substitute for job growth. And we will likely see further job losses in the coming days, a fact that is both troubling for our economy and heartbreaking for the men and women who suddenly find themselves out of work. But we will not create the jobs we need unless the economy is growing; that's why this GDP report is a good sign. And we can see clearly now that the steps my administration is taking are making a difference, blunting the worst of this recession and helping to bring about its conclusion.

We've acted aggressively to jump-start credit for families and businesses, including small businesses, which have seen an increase in lending of 73 percent. We've taken steps to stem the tide of foreclosures, modifying mortgages to help hundreds of thousands of responsible homeowners keep their homes and

help millions more sustain the value in their homes. And the Recovery Act is spurring demand through a tax cut for 95 percent of working families and through assistance for seniors and those who have lost jobs, which not only helps folks hit hardest by the downturn but also encourages the consumer spending that will help turn the economy around.

Finally, the Recovery Act is saving and creating jobs all across the country. Just this week, we reached an important milestone. Based on reports coming in from across America, as shovels break ground, as needed public servants are rehired, and as factories whir to life, it is clear that the Recovery Act has now created and saved more than 1 million jobs. That's more than a million people who might otherwise be out of work today, folks who can wake up each day knowing that they'll be able to provide for themselves and for their families.

We've saved jobs by closing State budget shortfalls to prevent the layoffs of hundreds of thousands of police officers, firefighters, and teachers who are today on the beat, on call, and in the classrooms because of the Recovery Act. And we've also created hundreds of thousands of jobs through the largest investment in our roads since the building of the Interstate Highway System and through the largest investment in education, medical research, and clean energy in history.

These investments aren't just helping us recover in the short term, they're helping to lay a new foundation for lasting prosperity in the long term, and they're giving hard-working, middle class Americans the chance to succeed and raise a family. Because of the investments we've made and the steps we've taken, it's easier for middle class families to send their kids to college and get the training and skills they need to compete in a global economy. We're making it easier for these families to save for retirement. And in areas like clean energy, we're creating the jobs of the future, jobs that pay well and can't be outsourced.

In fact, just this week, I traveled to Arcadia, Florida, to announce the largest set of clean energy projects through the Recovery Act so far: 100 grants for businesses, utilities, manufacturers, cities, and other partners across the country to put thousands of people to work modernizing our electric grid, the system that provides power to our homes and businesses, so that it wastes less energy, helps integrate renewables like wind and solar, and saves consumers money. And that's just one example.

So we have made progress. At the same time, I want to emphasize that there's still plenty of progress to be made. For we know that positive news for the economy as a whole means little if you've lost your job and can't find another, if you can't afford health care or the mortgage, if you do not see in your own life the improvement we are seeing in these economic statistics. And positive news today doesn't mean there won't be difficult days ahead. As I've said many times, it took years to dig our way into the crisis we've faced. It will take more than a few months to dig our way out. But make no mistake: That's exactly what we will do.

For the economy we seek is one where folks who need a job can find one and incomes are rising again. The economy we seek is one where small businesses can flourish and entrepreneurs can get the capital they need to plant new seeds of growth. The economy we seek is one that's no longer based on maxed-out credits cards, wild speculation, and the old cycles of boom or bust, but rather one that is built on a solid foundation, supporting growth that is strong, sustained, and broadly shared by middle class families across America. That's what we are working toward every single day. And we will not stop until we get there.

Thanks, and happy Halloween.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:05 p.m. on October 30 in the Library at the White House for broadcast on October 31. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 30, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on October 31. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Campaign Rally for Governor Jon S. Corzine in Camden, New Jersey

November 1, 2009

The President. Thank you so much. I am—woo—fired up! I am fired up. Let me first of all acknowledge some extraordinary public servants who are in the house: Rob Andrews, our wonderful Congressman; Steve Rothman, another great Member of Congress; Gwen Faison, the Mayor of Camden. Thank you, Gwen. To all the other elected officials who are here, I am just glad to be back in Camden. When I was campaigning last year, I said I'd come back once I was President. I couldn't stay away. I like—I just like hanging out in New Jersey.

I appreciate all of you who aren't at the Giants/Eagles game. [*Laughter*] I didn't mean to stir all that up, I'm sorry. All right, settle down now, settle down.

Here's the reason I'm back. I am back because we are 2 days away—2 days away from making sure that New Jersey has the kind of quality leadership it deserves, two days away from making sure we're moving forward on education, two days away from making sure that we've got fairness in our economic system, two days away from reelecting Jon Corzine for another 4 years—2 days.

Now, at this point in the campaign, you've heard all the arguments. You've seen all the TV ads. You know all the facts of this race. You know that Jon's running for reelection during a challenging time for New Jersey and a challenging time for America. I don't have to tell you that. You——

Audience member. Obama, I love you!

Audience member. Me too!

The President. You know how tough things are because you see it in your own lives. You see it in your own communities. You see it right here in Camden: too many folks who are out of work; too many people who are looking for a job; too many hard-working families being squeezed by skyrocketing costs of everything on one side and shrinking wages on the other side.

You've got men and women who've worked hard all their lives, done all the right things, and now they're worried about whether they're going to be able to send their kids to college or retire with dignity and respect, whether they can be the kinds of providers they want to be, all because of economic factors beyond their control.

Everywhere you go, you talk to people, and they say, "You know, I was saving up all my life; I had it in a 401(k). Suddenly because of this financial crisis, I may have to go back to work." Young people say, "Well, maybe I've got to put off college for longer than I had hoped."

So I know these are challenging times. Jon knows these are challenging times. This is why he got into public service. He didn't do it for the paycheck. He did it because he understands that we can do better. And for the past 4 years, you've had an honorable man at the helm in this State during one of the most difficult periods in its history. You've had a leader who's put the interests of hard-working New Jersey families ahead of the special interests. You've had a leader who's fought for what matters most. That's the kind of Governor Jon Corzine's been. And that's the kind of Governor that he will be for another 4 years if everybody here does their job.

Now, you know there's a lot of silliness during campaign season, a lot of distortion. So let's just make sure everybody understands the record. Let's make sure we all understand Jon Corzine's record and what's happened over the last several years, because, you know, opponents' records kind of get distorted a little bit during the course of a campaign. This is a Governor who provided more property tax relief than any Governor in New Jersey history—more than any Governor in New Jersey history. So when you hear these other folks talking about how, oh, you know, Democrats are tax-and-spend, and, oh, you know, Corzine, he's putting a big tax—this is the guy who delivered more property tax relief than anybody, right here. So if you care about fairness

in the tax system, this is the guy you're going to vote for.

You hear the other side talking about, oh, they want to expand government. Jon Corzine is the first Governor in 60 years who reduced the size of government—reduced it. But he understands that when you're going to reduce government, when you're going to lower property taxes, you don't do it with a hatchet, you do it with a scalpel. You cut out things that don't make sense so you can keep on doing the things that do make sense.

So here's a guy who expanded early childhood education for more than 5,000 children because he understood that pre-K isn't babysitting, it's a pathway to success for young people. This is a guy who expanded the Children's Health Insurance Program by nearly 100,000 young people in this State. Think about that: one hundred thousand kids getting health insurance that didn't have it before because of Jon Corzine.

New Jersey is now a leader in clean energy. And working families can spend time with a newborn baby or a sick loved one because of paid sick leave that was signed into law by—guess who—Jon Corzine. When it comes to the issues that matter, like jobs, Jon Corzine's been a true leader, the first Governor in the country to pass a recovery plan to get the State's economy moving.

Now, listening to Jon's opponent, you'd think that New Jersey was the only State having a tough time right now. He doesn't seem to mention that we're in the—coming out of the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. And guess what? That crisis didn't start under Jon's watch. It wasn't a consequence of Obama policies or Corzine policies that we went into this hole.

There seems to be some selective memory going on here, some revisionist history about how we ended up in the situation we're in. This crisis came about because of the same sort of lax regulation, the same sort of trickle-down economics that the other guy's party had been peddling for years.

And I've been saying all over the country, I don't think it's right for those who helped get us into this mess to be somehow standing back and saying, "Well, why haven't you fixed it?" I don't mind grabbing a mop and cleaning up somebody else's mess. That's fine. Jon Corzine doesn't mind cleaning up somebody else's mess. But don't stand there and say, "How come you're not holding the mop the right way? How come you're not mopping fast enough? Why are you using a socialist mop?" [*Laughter*] Why don't you grab a mop? Grab a mop.

We don't need politicians who are more interested in scoring points than solving problems. We don't need politicians who are offering the same answers that got us into the mess in the first place. We don't need politicians who'd rather sit on the sidelines and point fingers than offer any answers, any real solutions. We need leaders who are committed to moving this country forward. We need leaders who are committed to moving New Jersey forward. And that's Jon Corzine, which is why you need to work hard on Tuesday.

I served with this man in the United States Senate. I learned about the kind of person he is, somebody who served this country as a United States Marine, somebody who worked his way up from a middle class family to achieve extraordinary success and then decided to give back to this country and this State that he loves. He's committed to giving every American the same opportunities he had. He was one of the best colleagues I had in the Senate, but he's also one of the best partners I have in the White House. We work together. We work together.

When we were putting together the Recovery Act, we worked together to figure out, how can we put people back to work as quickly as possible, how can we make sure we're not cutting vital education programs and not laying off cops and firefighters and teachers all across the country. And that Recovery Act that we designed has put a middle class tax cut in the pockets of 3 million hard-working New Jersey families. It's extended unemployment insurance for 600,000 men and women in this State. It's made COBRA 65 percent cheaper so people can keep their health care when they lose their job.

Jon Corzine helped get this done. Now, look, the reason you're here, the reason I'm here, the reason Jon's running for reelection is we know

our work is far from over. You know we still got big challenges ahead, in New Jersey, here in Camden, and all across America. We're not going to rest until we solve them.

And by the way, we're also not going to pretend that they're going to be easy. One of the things you've got in Jon Corzine is somebody who tells it to you straight. There are all kinds of folks out there who will pretend, well, you know, there are a bunch of simple answers there. These are tough times. Rebuilding Camden, that's not going to be easy. Anybody who says it is isn't telling you the truth. Digging ourselves out of this financial hole, that's not going to be easy. Anybody who says otherwise, they're not telling you the truth.

But when you have somebody who's giving it to you straight and then says, "But I'm confident if we work together we can make it happen, and I'm not going to rest until anyone who's looking for a job can find a job and a job that pays a living wage"—when you've got somebody who says, "I'm not going to rest until not only is Wall Street doing well but Main Street is doing well and businesses are hiring again. I'm not going to rest until every young person in America is getting a world-class education and every American's dream is within their reach if they're willing to work for it and fight for it. I'm not going to rest until we build a clean energy economy that's going to free our Nation from the grips of foreign oil and generate green jobs right here in New Jersey. "I will not rest until every single person in America can afford to get decent health care."

That's the kind of Governor you're looking for. And you've got him in Jon Corzine. That's what we're fighting for in Washington, DC. That's what Jon's fighting for right here in New Jersey. And he's going to keep on fighting if you give him a chance on Tuesday.

Now listen, if you ended up showing up at this rally, let's face it, I'm preaching to the choir here. [*Laughter*] I know you're going to vote on Tuesday. But because this is a tough period in our economy, because it's tough here in New Jersey right now, there are a lot of people out there who understandably feel cynical, you know, who think that change should happen overnight. All of you are going to have to be ambassadors for change. All of you are going to have to be out there explaining that it's hard work, but if we turn out to vote on Tuesday and we put in somebody who we know is on our side, then we can continue the progress that this extraordinary State has made.

You know that's what's going to be required. And so I just want everybody here to know, yes, you are going to vote on Tuesday, but I need you to go back into your neighborhoods. I'm going to need you to knock on doors. I'm going to need you to make phone calls. I'm going to need you to do the same thing you did last year. You're going to have to go talk to your family members. You're going to have to get Cousin Pookie off the couch and tell him, "Pookie, it's time to go vote." [*Laughter*] You got Cousin Pookie; you know who I'm talking about. Everybody's got one of those. [*Laughter*]

But if everybody here understands that working hard for 48 hours could end up putting New Jersey on a pathway of success for the next 4 or the next 8, the next 16, the next 32, then I know you're going to do the work.

And so I'll just close with a story I may have told some of you guys a while back, but it's always a reminder of why it's so important for you to work so hard, because many of you now take for granted that we won the election. But back when I was starting our election, you guys couldn't pronounce my name. [*Laughter*] Nobody gave us a chance. Nobody gave us a chance. Everybody said it was going to be too hard for a guy named Barack Obama, only 4 years in the Senate—how is he going to win the Presidency?

So I remember—yes, everybody now says, "I believed," but back then you all didn't believe. [*Laughter*] So I went down to—South Carolina was an early State. I don't know if you remember. South Carolina was one of the early States like Iowa and New Jersey or New Hampshire. New Jersey was a little bit later. And so—[*laughter*]—I'm going to have to go talk to this young lady over here. Let me tell my story. [*Laughter*]

So I'm in South Carolina, and I've gone down there to campaign. Nobody knows me. I'm at some legislative banquet. I'm sitting

next to a State rep there, and I'm begging her, you need to endorse my candidacy for President. She looks at me. Finally, she says, "You know, I think I will endorse you if you are willing to come to my hometown of Greenwood, South Carolina." Now, I must have had a glass of wine that night because I just right away said, "Okay, I'm coming. I promise."

Only to find out later that Greenwood is an hour and a half from every place else. [*Laughter*] You cannot—you can't fly straight into Greenwood. So about a month later, I come back, and by this time, I'm full-bore into the campaign. I'm exhausted. I've been campaigning 16-hour days in Iowa and New Hampshire. And I get in about midnight, get to the hotel by about 1 o'clock. I'm dragging my bag. I'm going into my hotel room. And suddenly my staff taps me on the shoulder and says, "Mr. President, you got to be up at 6:30 a.m. in the car." I say, "Why is that?" He said, "Well, we got to go to Greenwood like you promised." [*Laughter*] So I said something that I can't repeat here—[*laughter*]—because, you know, I don't want anybody to punish Jon Corzine for my language.

So the next morning I wake up, and I feel awful. I'm exhausted, just beat. And I stagger over to the window hoping to kind of open the shades, kind of wake myself up. It's pouring down rain outside, miserable day. I go get some coffee and the newspaper, I open it up, there's a bad story about me in the New York Times. [*Laughter*] I go downstairs after I've packed up, and as I'm walking to the car, my umbrella breaks, and the rain pours down, and I'm soaked.

So by the time I'm in the car, I'm wet, I'm sleepy, and I'm mad. [*Laughter*] And we're driving, and we're driving, and we're driving, and it takes forever to get to Greenwood. Finally, we get to Greenwood, although you don't know you're there right away. [*Laughter*] And we pull up alongside a little park district building. It's tiny. We walk in, and lo and behold, after this extraordinary journey, there are only 20 people there. It wasn't like a crowd like this. And they're all looking kind of wet and mad. [*Laughter*]

So I've got a job to do. I'm shaking hands: "How do you do? What do you do?" Suddenly from behind me I hear this shout: "Fired up?" And I'm stunned; I'm shocked. And everybody else around me, though, acts like this is normal, and they all say, "Fired up!" And then I hear this voice, "Ready to go?" And everybody else says, "Ready to go!"

And I look behind me, and there's this little woman there, about, I'd say, 50, 60 years old. She's got—she looks like she just came back from church, got a big church hat. [*Laughter*] And she's grinning at me, and she's looking at me, and she says, "Fired up?" Turns out, she is a city councilwoman from Greenwood, South Carolina, who's famous for her chant. She's well known for—at events, she goes around, and she starts saying, "Fired up?" "Fired up!" "Ready to go?" "Ready to go!" This is the thing she's known for. She also moonlights as a private detective. This is a true story—true story. [*Laughter*]

Anyway, for the next 5 minutes, she just keeps on chanting. "Fired up?" "Fired up!" "Ready to go?" "Ready to go!" She starts putting some twists on it. "Barack Obama/is going to be/ the next President!" And she keeps on doing this. "Fired up!" And I realize that I'm being upstaged by this woman. So I'm looking at my staff, and they're all, "We don't know what's going on." [*Laughter*]

Here's the thing, though, Camden. After about a minute or two, I start realizing I'm feeling kind of fired up. [*Laughter*] I'm starting to feel like I'm ready to go. And for the rest of the day, whenever I saw my staff, I'd say, "Are you fired up?" They'd say, "I'm fired up, boss. Are you ready to go?" I'd say, "I'm ready to go." [*Laughter*]

Here's my point.

Audience member. Fired up!

The President. Here's my point. That woman's voice, one voice, changed the room. Now, if one voice can change the room, it can change a city. And if it can change a city, then it can change a State. And if it can change a State, it can change a country. And if it can change a country, it can change the world. Your voice can change the world. Your voice can change New Jersey. Your voice can change Camden. Your

voice will get Jon Corzine 4 more years as Governor of New Jersey. And he and I will partner with you to make sure that every child gets a good education, everybody has health care, everybody has a job that pays a living wage. That's what we're fighting for. I need you to work, so I'm going to ask you, Camden, are you fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. Fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. Fired up?

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. Ready to go?

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. Let's get to work. Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:35 p.m. at the Susquehanna Bank Center. In his remarks, he referred to New Jersey gubernatorial candidate Christopher J. Christie; South Carolina State Rep. J. Anne Parks; and Edith Childs, city council member, Greenwood, SC.

Remarks at a Campaign Rally for Governor Jon S. Corzine in Newark, New Jersey

November 1, 2009

The President. How's it going, New Jersey? Thank you. Thank you. Yes we can!

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. Thank you. Thank you. It's good to be back in Jersey. I told you I was coming back. You can't keep me away. And that's because that we're just 2 days away from giving 4 more years to my good friend and your Governor, Jon Corzine.

We've got some other outstanding public servants in the house. I just want to mention them: a trifecta of outstanding Members of Congress—Donald Payne, Frank Pallone, Bill Pascrell, and Steve Rothman—I actually have four of them. The—one of the finest mayors not just in New Jersey, but all throughout the country, Cory Booker's in the house. Essex County Executive Joe DiVincenzo is in the house. And Jon Corzine's partner who's going to help lead this State to 4 outstanding years of additional prosperity, Loretta Weinberg is in the house.

Now, look, at this point in the campaign, you've heard all the arguments. You've seen all the ads. In fact, you're tired of all the ads. [*Laughter*] You know that Jon Corzine's running for reelection. You know that the other guy doesn't seem to have a very proactive agenda other than going after Jon. You know that it's a tough time for New Jersey and it's a tough time for America. I don't have to tell you that. You see it in your own lives, you see it here in Newark, you see it all around the country: too many folks out of work, too many hard-working families who are seeing their costs of everything go up and seeing their wages shrink, their hours reduced.

You've got men and women who've been working all their lives, working hard, and somehow they're worried about whether they can retire with dignity and respect. They're worried about whether they can send their kids to college. They're wondering whether they can be the kind of providers, the kind of husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, they hope to be because of economic factors out of their control.

Audience members. We love you, Obama!

The President. I love you back. But I've got an important message here. But listen up, listen up. You know, when you've got seniors worried about retirement, you got young people worried about their ability to pay for college, you know these are challenging times, and so you want somebody who is in politics for the right reason.

Jon Corzine's in politics for the right reason. He knows folks are hurting. But here's what I know: For the past 4 years, you've had an

honorable man, a decent man, an honest man at the helm of this State during extraordinary times. You've had a leader who's put the interests of hard-working New Jersey families ahead of self-interest and ahead of politics. He's fought for what matters to ordinary folks. That's the kind of Governor Jon Corzine has been, and if everybody in this auditorium works hard in the next 2 days, that's the kind of Governor he's going to be for another 4 more years.

Let's look at the record. Don't worry about all that political nonsense that's out there, all the negative ads. Let's look at the record. There's a tendency among politicians to distort their opponent's record in the heat of the campaign. We understand that. Jon's a tough guy. But let's look at the record. Jon Corzine is a Governor who's provided more property tax relief than any Governor in New Jersey's history. He's the first Governor in 60 years who's actually reduced the size of government in this State.

Now, so when you hear the other side talking about how Jon Corzine's a tax-and-spend Democrat and all that stuff, just look at the record. He's done what they couldn't do, and what they didn't do. But here's what's important, and Cory Booker will testify, he—folks here in Newark with testify. He has been prudent with your taxpayer dollars, but he's protected the things that matter the most.

Here's a guy who's stood up when they wanted to cut education. Jon Corzine stood up. Corzine expanded early childhood education for more than 5,000 children. He understood pre-K isn't babysitting, it's a pathway to success for our young people. That's the kind of Governor you need.

At a time when the other guy doesn't have too much to say about health care, Jon Corzine, under his leadership, saw the Children's Health Insurance Program expand by nearly 100,000 more kids. Think about that, a hundred thousand kids who got health insurance because of the work of this Governor and his partners.

Jon Corzine's looking towards the future. And so he's made New Jersey a clean energy leader because he knows that's where the jobs are going to come from, jobs that can't be outsourced, that pay a good wage. Working families can spend time with a newborn baby or a sick loved one because of paid sick leave signed into law by Jon Corzine.

When it comes to the issues that matter most—the issue of jobs—Corzine was at the forefront. He worked with me to develop the Recovery Act. He was the first Governor in the country to pass a recovery plan to get this State's economy moving again. Listening to Jon's opponent, you'd think New Jersey was the only State going through a tough time right now. I have something to report. We had the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. By the way, that didn't start under Jon's watch. That didn't start under my watch. I wasn't sworn in yet.

You got a little bit of revisionist history, a little selective memory going on, a little amnesia about how we got into this mess. This crisis that we are digging ourselves out of came about because of the same theories, the same lax regulation, the same trickle-down economics that the other guy's party's been peddling for years.

And you know, look, we're not interested in relitigating the past here, and I'm more than happy to go ahead and do the work that's required to get this economy moving again. I think about it every day. Jon Corzine thinks about it every day. Essentially, we don't mind cleaning up after somebody else's mess.

Now, the one thing I'd say, though, is, if I've got the mop and I'm cleaning up after that mess, and Jon's got the mop and he's cleaning up after somebody else's mess, the least these other folks can do is not stand there and say, "You're not holding the mop the right way. You're not mopping fast enough. You're using a socialist mop." Let me tell you something, just pick up a mop. Let's help clean up this country and make it work for ordinary people right here in New Jersey.

We don't need politicians who are more interested in scoring points than solving problems. We don't need politicians who are offering the same half-baked approaches that got us into this mess in the first place. We don't need politicians who would rather stand on the sidelines and point fingers instead of offering answers and solutions. What we need are leaders who are committed to moving this country forward, who are committed to moving New

Jersey forward, who've got your interests in mind. And that's who Jon Corzine is, and that's why he deserves another 4 years as Governor of New Jersey.

Let me say this: I know this man. When I was running for the United States Senate, before anybody knew my name, Jon Corzine offered his support. I served with him in the United States Senate, where I learned about his service as a United States marine. I learned about how he worked his way up from a middle class family and wants to make sure every American has the same ladders to opportunity that he had.

He partnered with me in developing our Recovery Act so that we gave New Jersey the kind of help it needed during the downturn, making sure that all across America, but right here as well, we prevented police officers and firefighters and teachers from being laid off. We made sure unemployment insurance was available to hundreds of thousands of folks here in New Jersey. We made health insurance, through COBRA, available for those folks who had lost their jobs so they wouldn't have to worry about their families' well being. We gave a middle class tax cut to 3 million folks right here in New Jersey.

Those are the kind of changes we brought about. That's what Jon Corzine's committed to. But we also understand that our work is not yet done. Our work is not yet done. We are digging ourselves out of a hole, and we've begun to pull ourselves back from the brink. We just found out the economy's growing again, and that means that people pretty soon are going to start seeing jobs again.

But we've got a long way to go. We are not going to rest until we make sure that everybody who wants a job can find a job that pays a living wage. We're not going to rest until we make sure every child in New Jersey and all across America gets a world-class education from the day that they walk into preschool to the day they graduate from college. We will not rest until we've got health care reform in America, because we don't want families to be bankrupt when they get sick. We are not going to rest until we've got a clean energy economy that helps free ourselves from dependence on foreign oil. We know how much work has to be done. You know how much work has to be done. And here's the question—is, how do we respond at this moment?

You know, last year when we had the election, everybody was excited, everything felt fresh and new, and we had a—we were going to turn the page. And because of you, because of your extraordinary efforts, because you believed, because you had confidence, because you knew that there was this gap between what America should be and what it was, and we could close that gap by working harder and working smarter and having a Government that was more transparent and more trustworthy, because of you, we succeeded at a time when nobody believed we could.

Now, I thank you for that: It wasn't because of me, it was because of you. But here's the thing. Here's the tough part. Here's the time when it's not as sexy, it's not as flashy. You know, this is when governing comes in, and we've got to make tough choices. And progress isn't always as quick as we want it. And we still got to negotiate with an intransigent opposition.

And after a while, people start feeling, "Well, gosh, I thought after we elected Obama, suddenly everything would be just fine, and suddenly kids would stop dropping out of school and everybody would be employed, chicken in every pot." [*Laughter*] Listen, I want you to remember, when I ran for election, I did not say—[*applause*]—wait, wait, wait—when I ran for election, I did not say this was going to come overnight. I didn't say this was going to be easy. I didn't say you were going to be able to just put your feet up and turn on the TV and kind of watch everything magically get better.

Change is hard. People resist change. The special interests resist change. Jon Corzine, when he was elected Governor, he did not promise it was going to be easy. What he promised was that he would wake up every single day thinking about you. What he promised was that you'd have a government that was committed to making sure that families got a fair shot in life. What he promised was that he would be willing to take good ideas

wherever they came from, including from the other party, as long as they improved the lives of New Jersey families.

And here's what I know, is that this guy has been working as hard as he promised. And so now the question is, how do you respond? We will not lose this election if all of you are as committed as you were last year. So I want everybody in this auditorium to make a pledge that in these next 48 hours, you will work just as hard for Jon as you worked for me. That you'll knock on just as many doors, that you'll make just as many phone calls, that you'll be calling your friends and your neighbors, your coworkers. You're going to be grabbing that—those relatives who don't vote all the time—Cousin Pookie, you're going to be calling him over—[*laughter*]—"Pook, you got to come vote, because your voice matters."

When Jon came out here, he asked if you were fired up. And I told this story about how I got—that story was actually from me traveling to South Carolina, and there was a city councilwoman there who, at a meeting that I was having at a time when my campaign was really just getting started and nobody knew who I was and nobody believed I could win, she looked at me, and she said, "Fired up!"

Audience members. Fired up!

The President. She said, "Ready to go!"

Audience members. Ready to go!

The President. And even though there were only 20 people in the room, even though I was tired and had been rained on and didn't have any endorsements and the pundits in Washington were writing me off, something about her saying "fired up" got me fired up. Something about her saying "ready to go" got me ready to go.

And it goes to show how one voice can change a room. And if one voice can change a room, it can change a city. And if it can change a city, it can change a State. And if it can change a State, it can change a nation. And if can change a nation, it can change a world. Your voice can change the world. Your voice can change the world.

If you are out there working hard, if Newark votes like it voted last year, if New Jersey votes like it voted last year, if all those folks who had felt disenfranchised and felt forgotten are reminded of the incredible power of ordinary people, the ability to do extraordinary things, if you will let your voice shine through, then I guarantee that you will not only reelect Jon Corzine for 4 more years, but you are going to put New Jersey on a path for success for years to come. And I can't wait to see it, Newark.

I love you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:39 p.m. at the Prudential Center. In his remarks, he referred to State Sen. Loretta Weinberg of New Jersey; New Jersey gubernatorial candidate Christopher J. Christie; and Edith Childs, city council member, Greenwood, SC.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board

November 2, 2009

All right. Hello, everybody. I am pleased to be joined this morning by my Economic Recovery Advisory Board. Each of these men and women have extraordinary and diverse expertise in the economy. I want to especially thank Paul Volcker, who has been a terrific adviser to me since the transition and has continued to help steer this group in ways that are providing us some very practical advice as we move forward.

I've said before, but I think it bears repeating, that we have come a long way since January, when at that time we were losing 700 jobs—700,000 jobs per month and across the political spectrum, I think, there was fear of the possibility of another great depression. We have pulled the economy back from the brink. We got good news last week showing that for the first time in over a year the economy was actually growing once again. And we have seen some

other indicators that manufacturing is beginning to pick up. That's all good news, and we are pleased that the actions that we took swiftly through the Recovery Act helped to stem what could have been a disastrous situation for the economy, and we are starting to see stabilization and, indeed, some improvement.

But the reason we're here today is because we just are not where we need to be yet. We've got a long way to go. We are still seeing production levels that are significantly below peak levels and most distressing is the fact that job growth continues to lag. Now, we all know that in every economic recovery there is going to be a lag between the economy growing again, businesses investing again, and businesses hiring again. But given the severity of the job growth that took—the job losses that took place at the beginning of the year and the need for us to make up a whole lot of job loss, is going to require, I think, some bold, innovative action on our part and on Congress's part and on the private sector's part.

It's also going to require that we look at new models for where future growth is going to come from, because one of the, I think, key understandings coming out of this past financial crisis is that a lot of our growth was debt-driven—credit cards being maxed out, home equity loans being taken out to finance a lot of purchases. Consumers, I think, wisely recognized that they can't get that overextended any more, and businesses are going to be more cautious in terms of how they approach taking on a lot of debt. The Government is going to have to get serious about reducing our debt levels.

And so one of our challenges now, and I've been speaking about this for many months now, is how do we get what I call a postbubble growth model, one that is sustainable. That's what we're going to be discussing here today. As I said, we've got experts from a wide range of business sectors, and what we're going to talk about is, are there mechanisms that we can start putting in place where we see the kind of growth that used to characterize the U.S. economy: export-driven growth, manufacturing growth, growth that pays high wages and provides high living standards for a broad-based middle class.

And I think that there are some excellent ideas that are already on the table. Some of them are being talked about in Congress. It's likely this week that we start seeing some discussion about potential tax cuts and credits that could make some difference in hiring, but we want to go beyond just tax policy.

So for example, we've got John Doerr sitting next to me, who has been one of the leading venture capitalists in the innovation economy and helped to spur on the revolution in the computer industry. John has unequal passions for the possibilities of green job growth in the future, and how, through projects like weatherization and retrofitting of buildings, we could generate millions of jobs and create huge prospects for growth over the long term.

Jeff Immelt of GE—down at the end—has been at the helm of one of our greatest manufacturers, an international company. Jeff, I think, recognizes that if we don't do more to export, we are not going to succeed in global competition. And so how we coordinate more effectively in our trade policies, in our approaches to working with manufacturing here in the United States—if we don't do that effectively, we're not going to succeed.

Rich Trumka has been talking about infrastructure for a long time, as have I, and I think my team will testify, when we got several trillion dollars worth of infrastructure that is falling apart, we need to put people to work, doing the work that America needs done. But we're also in an era of fiscal constraint, which means that we've got to start finding more creative, new approaches to financing these projects.

So those are the discussions we're going to be having, not just today but in the weeks and months to come. This is my administration's overriding focus. Having brought the economy back from the brink, the question is how are we going to make sure that people are getting back to work and able to support their families. It's not going to happen overnight, but we will not rest until we are succeeding in generating the jobs that this economy needs.

And I couldn't ask for a better group of people to bounce ideas off of, and we are going to be soliciting ideas from the private sector, from businesses large and small, from academia and from all political persuasions. If somebody can show me a strategy that's going to work, then we are happy to consider it.

And just—I want to end by saying this. We anticipate that we're going to continue to see some job losses in the weeks and months to come. As I said before, there is a—always a lag of several months between businesses starting to make profits again and investing again and then actually rehiring again. But I want to emphasize I am confident that having moved the economy on the right track, that if we apply some good common sense and some—and reinvigorate that sector of our economy that's based on innovation and dynamism and entrepreneurship, that there's no reason why we're not going to be able to not only create jobs, but the kind of sustainable economic growth that everybody is looking for.

So thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:24 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Paul A. Volcker, chairman, President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board; L. John Doerr, partner, Kleiner, Perkins, Caufield & Byers; Jeffrey R. Immelt, chairman and chief executive officer, General Electric; and Richard L. Trumka, president, AFL–CIO.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister John Fredrik Reinfeldt of Sweden

November 2, 2009

President Obama. I am thrilled to have the Prime Minister of Sweden with us here today. We have had occasion to meet fairly frequently this year between all the various summits that we've participated in. I've always been struck by the Prime Minister's thoughtful, measured approach to some of the most important global challenges that we face.

We had a very constructive discussion on a range of issues. At the top of the list was the issue of climate change. We're approaching the Copenhagen negotiations that will be taking place in December, and both Sweden, the United States—and, I think it's fair to say, the EU as a whole and the world as a whole—are interested in an outcome that can start moving us down the path of a sustainable economy that is not accelerating the potential catastrophe of climate change.

Sweden has been a real leader in this. We appreciate their leadership. We are confident that if all countries involved recognize this is a unique opportunity, that we can get an important deal done, not that solves every problem on this issue, but takes an important step forward and lays the groundwork for further progress in the future.

We also discussed Afghanistan. I thanked Fredrik for the contributions of Sweden to the very important effort of stabilizing a country that has been war-torn and is a source of security concerns for all of us. And to the extent that the European Union continues to make contributions on the civilian front, on the training of police, on development issues like agriculture, then we think that we can see real progress.

I should use this moment to say that about an hour ago, I spoke with President Karzai, and I congratulated him on his election for a second term as President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Although the process was messy, I'm pleased to say that the final outcome was determined in accordance with Afghan law, which I think is very important, not only for the international community that has so much invested in Afghan success but, most importantly, is important for the Afghan people, that the results were in accordance with and followed the rules laid down by the Afghan Constitution.

I did emphasize to President Karzai that the American people and the international community as a whole want to continue to partner with him and his Government in achieving prosperity and security in Afghanistan. But I emphasized

that this has to be a point in time in which we begin to write a new chapter based on improved governance, a much more serious effort to eradicate corruption, joint efforts to accelerate the training of Afghan security forces so that the Afghan people can provide for their own security. That kind of coordination and a sense on the part of President Karzai that after some difficult years in which there's been some drift, that in fact, he's going to move boldly and forcefully forward and take advantage of the international community's interest in his country to initiate reforms internally. That has to be one of our highest priorities.

He assured me that he understood the importance of this moment, but as I indicated to him, the proof is not going to be in words; it's going to be in deeds. And we are looking forward to consulting closely with his Government in the weeks and months to come to assure that the Afghan people are actually seeing progress on the ground.

The last point I would just make, the European Union obviously is an important trading partner of ours. We are seeing a world economy stabilize after a very difficult period of time. I think Fredrik would agree that it is absolutely critical that we continue to coordinate closely when it comes to our economic policies to assure that we are moving in a direction of more robust growth that creates more jobs in the United States and in Europe and that we continue to shy away from any protectionist measures that might actually reverse some of these positive trends.

So once again, welcome. Thank you for your outstanding work both as Prime Minister and as President. And please communicate the very warm feelings that the United States people have towards the people of Sweden.

Prime Minister Reinfeldt. Yes, we will.

Well, thank you very much, Barack. As you said, we have met on several occasions. We share excellent bilateral relations. And this is also a strong transatlantic link, which is very important for us.

We have discussed, as mentioned, the Afghanistan situation. And the European Union has also said that we're glad that we now can see a second term for Karzai, that it's now concluded. We talked about long-term commitment in Afghanistan. We actually have 500 Swedish troops there. We're up to 35,000 now on the European Union side. It's very important, as Barack mentioned, to see this as both creating security but also in governance issues, which would be of utmost importance to have a ownership of their own in creating sustainable working conditions, living conditions for the people of Afghanistan.

The main issue was, as it often is now, the climate issue. We need to work together. We need to find ours—find each other in the process to meet the two-degree target when it comes to Copenhagen and the time thereafter. And we have spoken today, I think, about that again.

So I thank you very much for your leadership on that issue.

President Obama. Thank you for the visit.

Prime Minister Reinfeldt. Thank you.

President Obama. Okay, guys, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:45 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Prime Minister Reinfeldt also spoke in his capacity as President of the European Council.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany
November 3, 2009

President Obama. Hello, everybody. Well, I'm just going to make a brief statement. I am thrilled to have Chancellor Merkel here today. I want to congratulate her again for her victory in her recent election, the formation of a Government, and we are honored to have her visit the Oval Office.

But the main reason she's here is that a great honor has been bestowed upon her. She is going to be the first German Chancellor in 50 years to address Congress, the first Chancellor ever to address a joint session of Congress. And it is, I think, a very appropriate honor that's been bestowed on Chancellor

Merkel. Obviously, the alliance between the United States and Germany has been an extraordinary pillar of the transatlantic relationship.

We are now moving towards the 20th anniversary of the Berlin Wall coming down and Germany being reunified after so many painful years. And this is a special moment for Chancellor Merkel, as somebody who grew up in East Germany, who understands what it's like to be under the shadow of a dictatorial regime, and to see how freedom has bloomed in Germany, how it has become the centerpiece for a extraordinarily strong European Union.

I think all of these things converge, and we are very pleased that she's going to be here to spread her view of what's taking place in the world, the many challenges we face, to Members of Congress and the American people.

I should just note that Germany has been an extraordinarily strong ally on a whole host of international issues. We appreciate the sacrifices of German soldiers in Afghanistan and our common work there to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan and to create the environment in which the Afghan people themselves can provide for their own security.

Chancellor Merkel has been an extraordinary leader on the issue of climate change. And the United States, Germany, and countries around the world, I think, are all beginning to recognize why it is so important that we work in common in order to stem the potential catastrophe that could result if we continue to see global warming continuing unabated.

And on economic issues, on issues like nuclear proliferation, consistently I found Chancellor Merkel to be thoughtful, to be energetic, and to have a strong vision of how we can move forward in the future.

So I am very pleased to be working with her as a partner. We are thankful, Chancellor, for your leadership not just in Europe but around the world. And I'm looking forward to many more years in which the American people and the German people are working together to expand the boundaries of freedom and to create prosperity for ordinary men and women on both sides of the Atlantic.

So thank you so much for coming.

Chancellor Merkel. Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you.

[*At this point, Chancellor Merkel spoke in German.*]

President Obama. I think what she said was good. [*Laughter*] I'm teasing.

[*Chancellor Merkel's remarks were translated by an interpreter as follows.*]

Chancellor Merkel. First of all, I would like to thank you very much for the opportunity to be able to be here again today. I would also like to say that it is, obviously, a very great honor for me to address today the joint session of the—of Congress, both Houses of Congress, as it were.

But I'm also very much looking forward to having an exchange of view with the President again. We have always had very intensive discussions, and we're going to have those today again on issues that are of mutual interest to us and that we have been working on almost daily. We are working and discussing issues, for example, related to climate change, Afghanistan, Iran, and obviously, also the world economic situation.

But I wanted to use this opportunity today also to express our gratitude, my gratitude, to the American people for the support that the American people have given us throughout the process leading up to German reunification, and I think it is something that I would like to later on say it very clearly also in my speech to both Houses of Congress. And let me tell you, it is something that we, the Germans, shall never forget.

President Obama. All right, thank you guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:14 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks Following a Meeting With European Union Leaders
November 3, 2009

President Obama. Well, I want to welcome, for the second day in a row, Prime Minister Reinfeldt. I also want to recognize President Barroso and Javier Solana. These three gentlemen, obviously, represent the leadership and the increasing integration, successful integration, that's been taking place in Europe.

I congratulated them on the completion of the Lisbon Treaty, which will further move Europe in the direction of integration, not only on economic policy, but also on a number of security issues. I believe that a strengthened and renewed EU will be an even better transatlantic partner with the United States. And so, we are extraordinarily appreciative and supportive of the efforts that they've made and the leadership of these three gentlemen.

Our discussions today built upon my April meeting with all 27 EU leaders in Prague. We discussed our shared commitment to success in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where EU civilian assistance has played an absolutely critical role. We discussed climate change extensively, and all of us agreed that it was imperative for us to redouble our efforts in the weeks between now and the Copenhagen meeting to assure that we create a framework for progress in dealing with what is a potential ecologic disaster. We discussed the situation in Iran and emphasized how important it is for the United States and the European Union to coordinate carefully and closely in sending a clear message to Tehran that we want them to be a full member of the community of nations, but that they have to act consistent with international rules and responsibilities with respect to their nuclear program.

We reaffirmed our commitment to strong, sustained economic growth that was articulated by the G–20 in Pittsburgh and reaffirmed our intent to continue to expand trade and resist protectionist measures between the United States and the European Union. And we spoke about how we can actually coordinate more effectively in preventing terrorism from spreading between our various countries. We also had a discussion about the Middle East and how we can work together closely on that front.

Overall, I want to say a special congratulations to President Barroso, who's been reelected for another 5-year term. He has done an excellent job in his role with the Commission. And I want to thank Fredrik for the leadership that he's shown on a wide range of issues, not just within Europe, but around the globe, as well. Javier has been a critical partner with us in dealing with the Iran issue. So these three gentlemen have shown global leadership. I'm glad they had a chance to visit the United States, and I'm absolutely committed to continuing to strengthen the transatlantic partnership that this meeting represents.

Prime Minister Reinfeldt. Well, thank you very much, Barack. Thank you for the hospitality. This is also very important for Europe to value this close cooperation with the United States and—since we share the same values. And I think we had a very good meeting.

We had at length a discussion about climate change. And I want to say that we need an agreement that can deliver on the two-degree target that could give us a solution on financing and that is global and that keeps—puts everyone together. That is what we need to see.

And I want to say that I think President Obama has shown real leadership on this issue. When we talk to people here in the United States, they all come back to this, that President Obama himself is very committed. He has great knowledge in this item, and we have great hopes for your leadership in this issue.

When it comes to Afghanistan, we also have a close partnership in Afghanistan. We have a huge representation also on European Union side. We have 35,000 troopers there and more than a billion euros a year that we actually immersed in development resources given to Afghanistan. So, of course, we need to have a close working relation when it comes to finding a way for Afghani ownership of the development in Afghanistan.

We actually have also delivered on four points. We have a start on cooperating on

energy and launched an EU-U.S. ministerial energy council. Our foreign energy ministers will have their first meeting tomorrow, which we welcome. Secondly, we intensify our cooperation and dialogue on transatlantic economic integration in order to reduce the barriers of trade.

Thirdly, deliverance is restored on dialogue on development, on global food security, climate change litigation, and the Millennium Development Goals. And last, to intensify the EU-U.S. cooperation on antimicrobio resistance. So we are very glad for all of these deliverances, as well.

Thank you.

President Obama. Excellent.

President Barroso. I think President Obama and Prime Minister Reinfeldt already made the most important points regarding the very productive meeting we just had. I'd like to thank President Obama for his very kind words to the European Union. In fact, we believe that is more important than ever, this relationship.

In this age of globalization, it is quite obvious that the United States and Europe can make a real difference. There are so many issues in the global agenda, from climate change to financial and economic cooperation to trade, many issues that we have discussed today.

Regarding climate change, I want to tell that I am more confident now than I was in days before. The Copenhagen negotiations have been slow, but I would like once again to pay tribute to President Obama's leadership. As I said earlier, President Obama changed the climate on the climate negotiations because with the strong leadership of United States we can indeed make an agreement. We are working toward a framework agreement in Copenhagen that will be an important agreement for the world. And we had, particularly, a very good discussion on this today, and I think that was one of the most important points of our exchange.

Of course, I will not repeat what President Obama and Prime Minister Reinfeldt just said. But it is extremely important on the other issues like Afghanistan and Pakistan and other issues of global security. Also, we work together now in the European Union with the Lisbon Treaty. The Lisbon Treaty is the treaty that will give the European Union a reinforced capacity to act, a more coherent position also, externally working with our main partners, and, of course, working especially with our American friends.

President Obama. Javier.

High Representative Solana. I have nothing to add really meaningful, Mr. President. [*Laughter*] Mr. President, thank you very much for your hospitality. We appreciate it.

President Obama. Well, thank you very much. You should understand that the rule in Washington is even if you don't have anything to say, you should take a long time to say it. [*Laughter*] So obviously, we'll have to give you more training. [*Laughter*]

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:11 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. Participating in the meeting were Prime Minister John Fredrik Reinfeldt of Sweden, in his capacity as President of the European Council; President Jose Manuel Durao Barroso of the European Commission; and Javier Solana Madariaga, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union.

Remarks to Students at James C. Wright Middle School in Madison, Wisconsin
November 4, 2009

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Well, we're thrilled to be here, and this is a school that's getting better and better, and you guys are working really, really hard. And we've been lucky. We have a President here who has got a tough, tough job. Being President is tough without the—he's fighting two wars, a really, really tough economy—I like your shirt.

Student. Thanks. [*Laughter*]

Secretary Duncan. And what amazes me is that week after week, month after month, he just keeps coming back to education, and he's absolutely passionate about it. He and his wife,

the First Lady Michelle Obama, received great educations. Neither one was born with a lot of money, but they worked really hard and had great teachers and great principals and made the most of it. And now he's our President. So it's a pretty remarkable journey. The only reason he's the President is because he got a great education.

So we're thrilled to be here. He might want to say a few things, and looks like you guys have questions for him. And so we'll be quick, and we'll open up to your questions.

The President. Well, it is good to see all of you. Thanks so much for having us.

First of all, I've got a great Secretary of Education in Arne Duncan. So he helps school districts all across the country in trying to figure out how to improve what's going on in the schools. And let me just pick up on something that Arne said earlier.

I was really lucky to have a great education. I didn't have a lot of money. My parents weren't famous. In fact, my father left when I was 2 years old, so I really didn't grow up with a father in the house; mostly it was my mom and my grandparents. But they always emphasized education, and they were able to send me to good schools, and by working hard I was, obviously, in a position to do some good stuff.

My wife Michelle, same thing; she grew up on the south side of Chicago. Her dad was actually disabled, he had multiple sclerosis, but he still worked every day in a blue collar job. And her mom didn't work, and when she did she was a secretary. But because she worked really hard in school she ended up getting a scholarship to Princeton and to Harvard Law School and ended up really being able to achieve a lot.

So that's the reason why we are spending a lot of time talking to folks like you, because we want all of you to understand that there's nothing more important than what you're doing right here at this school. And Wright has a great reputation; this school is improving all the time. But ultimately, how good a school is depends on how well you guys are doing.

And the main message that I just wanted to deliver to you is, every single one of you could be doing the same kinds of things that Arne is doing or I'm doing. Or you could be running a company, or you can be inventing a product or you could—look, anything you can imagine, you can accomplish, but the only way you do it is if you're succeeding here in school. And we are spending a lot of money to try to improve school buildings and put computers in and make sure that your teachers are well trained and that they are getting the support they need.

So we're working really hard to try to reform the schools, but ultimately, what matters most is how badly you want a good education. If you think that somehow somebody is just going to—you can tilt your head and somebody is going to pour education in your ear, that's just not how it works. The only way that you end up being in a position to achieve is if you want it, if inside you want it.

And part of the reason why we wanted to talk to you guys is, you're right at the point now in your lives where what you do is really going to start mattering. My daughters are a little younger than you—Malia is 11, Sasha is 8—but when you're in grade school, you're playing—hopefully, somebody is making sure you're doing your homework when you get it, but to some degree you're still just kind of learning how to learn.

By the time you get to middle school, you're now going to be confronted with a lot of choices. You're going to start entering those teenage years where there are a lot of distractions and in some places people will say you don't need to worry about school or it's uncool to be smart or, you know, all kinds of things. And look, I'll be honest, I went through some of that when I was in high school, and I made some mistakes and had some setbacks.

So I just want everybody to understand right now that nothing is going to be more important to you than just being hungry for knowledge. And if all of you decide to do that, then there are going to be teachers and principals and secretaries of education who are going to be there to help you. So hopefully, you guys will take that all to heart.

All right. Okay. Now we're going to kick out everybody so I can let you—you guys can ask

me all the really tough questions without having the press here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at James C. Wright Middle School in Madison
November 4, 2009

Thank you, everybody. Hello, Madison! Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody, please, have a seat. Have a seat.

It is good to see all of you. Good to be back in Madison. I want to first of all just say that Jim Doyle is not only one of the finest Governors we have in the country but is also a great friend, a great supporter; his entire family has been wonderful. And so I just could not be prouder to associate myself with the outstanding work that Jim has done in the State. Please give him a big round of applause.

We've got two wonderful mayors in the house. First of all, your own, Dave Cieslewicz, is here—Dave. And Milwaukee's outstanding mayor, Tom Barrett, is in the house.

I am so impressed with the work that's been done here at Wright Middle School, and I know that Principal Nancy Evans deserves a huge amount of credit, so please give her a big round of applause. And to the faculty and the staff, but most importantly, the students, who I had a chance to meet with earlier today, they are just some outstanding young people. So if there are any parents of students in the house, you should be proud, and give them all a big round of applause.

Now, it's great to be back in Madison, great to be back in Wisconsin. And I've heard great things about Wright, so I've got very high expectations for all the students here, and I told them this. I expect them to keep up the good work that you've already been putting in to make sure that you succeed not just in middle school, but also in high school, also in college, and for the rest of your lives. And parents, I want you to stay on them because that is an absolutely critical ingredient for their success.

You know, 1 year ago, Americans all across this country went to the polls and cast ballots for the future they wanted to see. Election day was a day of hope, it was a day of possibility, but it was also a sobering one because we knew even then that we faced an array of challenges that would test us as a country. We already saw that there was a financial crisis that threatened to plunge our economy into a great depression, the worst that we've seen in generations. We had record deficits, two wars, frayed alliances around the world.

Facing this reality, my administration had two fundamental obligations. The first was to rescue the economy from imminent collapse. And while we still have a long way to go, we have made meaningful progress toward achieving that goal. We acted boldly and swiftly to pass a Recovery Act that has made a difference for families right here in Wisconsin, and Jim, your Governor, described the difference that it's made.

We've put a tax cut into the pockets of 95 percent of hard-working families. We created or saved over 1 million jobs, including 4,000 education jobs right here in Wisconsin. We've taken steps to unlock our frozen credit markets so that the ordinary American can get the loan that he or she needs to buy a home or a car, to go to college or start a new business. We've enacted measures to stem the crisis in our housing market to help responsible homeowners stay in their homes and curb the decline of home values overall.

So all these things contributed to the first quarter of economic growth that we've had as a nation in over a year. The rate of job loss is slowing, although not nearly fast enough yet. The work continues. But we're moving in the right direction, and we are going to keep on fulfilling our obligation to do every single thing we possibly can to pull this economy out of the ditch and to make sure that people can find jobs that pay good wages. That's our top priority.

So that was the rescue part of our job, just solving the immediate crisis. But we also came

into office with another goal, another obligation, not simply to do what needed to be done to deal with an emergency crisis, but to make those long-term investments necessary to build our economy stronger than before. It was an obligation to tackle problems that had been festering, problems that had been kicked down the road year after year, decade after decade, problems that have to be overcome for America to move forward.

See, even before the crisis, we were having big problems. We were just papering them over. Manufacturing was declining, and we weren't producing as many high-tech, high-skilled jobs as we needed to be. We had an energy situation where suddenly, oil producers or speculators want to constrict supply, and next thing you know, you're paying 4 bucks at the pump. So we didn't have energy independence. Health care costs were skyrocketing—before the crisis—so that families were seeing more and more out-of-pocket costs and essentially trading away salary and wages just to keep up with their premiums.

So we had an obligation to create a better health care system that works for our people, our businesses, and our Government alike. And that's why we've been pushing so hard on health care reform. That's why we took up the cause of a clean energy economy that will free America from the grip of foreign oil and generate millions of good-paying jobs in the process, green jobs in retrofitting old buildings to make them more energy efficient, creating the batteries and other technologies needed for plug-in hybrids that can get 150 miles a gallon—and will help to curb climate change. And that's why we're taking up the cause that I'm here to talk about today, and that is offering the best possible education to America's sons and daughters.

American prosperity has long rested on how well we educate our children. But this has never been more true than it is today. In the 21st century, when countries that outeducate us today will outcompete us tomorrow, there is nothing that will determine the quality of our future as a nation and the lives our children will lead more than the kind of education that we provide them. Nothing is more important.

And here is what we know: Over the course of a lifetime, those with a college degree—and I want the young people here especially to listen to this—over the course of a lifetime, those with a college degree earn over 60 percent more than those with only a high school diploma, 60 percent more. Most of the fastest growing jobs require a bachelor's degree or more. This is what we were talking about earlier in the classroom. Four out of every 10 new jobs will require at least some advanced education or training within the next decade. So put simply, the right education is a prerequisite for success. There was a time when if you just got a high school education and you were willing to work hard, you could get a job in a trade or in the factory that paid a middle class wage. And those days are declining. The currency of today's economy is knowledge.

And yet we continue to trail other countries in a number of critical areas. The United States, a nation that has always led the way in innovation, is now being outpaced in math and science education. A handful of States have even gone in the wrong direction, lowering their standards at the very moment that they should be raising them. We used to rank number one in the number of college graduates and advanced degrees. That's not the case anymore. Meanwhile, African American and Latino students continue to lag behind their White classmates, an achievement gap that will ultimately cost us hundreds of billions of dollars because that's our future workforce.

Of course, these problems aren't new. We've heard about them for years. But instead of coming together to solve them, we've let partisanship and petty bickering stand in the way of progress. It's been Democrat versus Republican; it's been voucher versus public schools; it's been more money versus more reform. In some cases, people have seen schools as sort of a political spoil having to do with jobs and contracts instead of what we're teaching kids. And this status quo has held back our children, it's held back our economy, and it's held back our country for too long. It's time to stop just talking about education reform and start actually doing it. It's time to make education America's national mission.

Now, I'm proud to say that thanks to one of the best Secretaries of Education America has ever had, Arne Duncan, who's here today—stand up, Arne, so everybody can see you—[*applause*]—thanks to Arne's passion and understanding of these issues and the ability to bring people together, that's exactly what we're going to do. We are making this America's national mission: improving our schools. Not in unrealistic ways, not in abstract ways, not in pie-in-the-sky ways, in concrete ways we are putting our resources behind the kinds of reforms that are going to make a difference.

In the coming weeks, States will be able to compete for what we're calling a Race to the Top award. We're putting over $4 billion on the table—4 billion with a "b"—one of the largest investments that the Federal Government has ever made in education reform. But we're not just handing it out to States because they want it. We're not just handing it out based on population. It's not just going through the usual political formulas. We're challenging States to compete for it.

And I have to tell you, this was not an easy thing to get through Congress. This is not normally how Federal dollars work. But because of Arne's tenacity and our commitment to make sure that reform happens, that's how we've structured it. We're saying to States, if you are committed to real change in the way you educate your children, if you're willing to hold yourselves more accountable, and if you develop a strong plan to improve the quality of education in your State, then we'll offer you a big grant to help you make that plan a reality.

Now, before a State is even eligible to compete, they'll have to take an important first step. And this has caused some controversy in some places, but it shouldn't be controversial. Any State that has a so-called firewall law will have to remove them. Now, here's what a firewall law is. It basically says that you can't factor in the performance of students when you're evaluating teachers. That is not a good message in terms of accountability. So we said, if you've got one of those laws, if you want to compete for these grants, you got to get rid of that law.

And we'll encourage States to take a better approach when it comes to charter schools and other innovative public schools. When these schools are performing poorly, they'll be shut down. But when innovative public schools are succeeding, they shouldn't be stifled, they should be supported.

And I'm proud to say that already a number of States have taken us up on this challenge. Across the country, different groups are coming together to bring about change in our schools: teachers unions and parents groups; businesses and community organizations. In places like New Haven, educators and city leaders have come together to find a smarter way to evaluate teachers and turn around low-performing schools. In States like California and Indiana and Wisconsin, you're seeing steps taken to remove these so-called firewall laws so we can have a clear look at how well our children are learning and what can be done to help them learn better. States like Delaware and Louisiana, Tennessee and Illinois are all making efforts to let innovative charter schools flourish.

So a race to the top has begun in our schools, but the real competition will begin when States apply for the actual Race to the Top grants. See, they had to make some changes just to even join the race. But now the race starts, and we're going to start seeing even more interesting changes at the local level. So we'll take a hard look at States' applications to determine whether they measure up. We'll take a look at a State's track record to determine whether the steps they've taken have had real results when it comes to their students' education. We'll take a look at whether States are taking an all-hands-on-deck approach when it comes to reform. And in particular, we'll take a look at how States are doing when it comes to four key measures of reform.

And I want to get into some details about this because I want you, as parents, as well as the educators, to understand what the data and the science and the studies and the research show actually make a big difference in terms of school improvement, and that—because that's what we are basing this stuff on. We didn't just kind of make it up, didn't just do it because it sounded good; this is what the research shows is really going to make a difference.

The first measure is whether a State is committed to setting higher standards and better

assessments that prepare our children to succeed in the 21st century. And I'm pleased to report that 48 States are now working to develop internationally competitive standards—internationally competitive standards because these young people are going to be growing up in an international environment where they're competing not just against kids in Chicago or Los Angeles for jobs, but they're competing against folks in Beijing and Bangalore.

This is something I called for earlier this year, and I want to commend the leadership of the Governors and school chiefs who've joined together to get this done. And because of these efforts, there will be a set of common standards that any State can adopt, beginning early next year. And I urge all our States to do so and to upgrade what's taught in the classroom accordingly to meet these international standards.

I also challenge States to align their assessments with high standards, because we should not just raise the bar, we should prepare our kids to meet it. There's no point in having really high standards but we're not doing what it takes to meet those standards. And I want to be clear: This is not just about more tests, because I know that in the past, people have been concerned about, you know, is this about standardized tests, or are we going to have our young people being taught to the test? That's the last thing we want.

But what we want to do is finally get testing right. So it's not about more tests, it's about being smarter about our assessments. It's about measuring not only whether our kids can master the basics, but whether they can solve challenging tasks; do they have the skills like critical thinking and teamwork and entrepreneurship; assessments that don't just give us a snapshot of how a student is doing in a particular subject, but a big picture look at how they're learning overall; and assessments that will help tell us if our kids have the knowledge and the skills to thrive when they graduate.

So we're not just interested in can they fill out a bubble. Right? What we want to do is to take a look generally: Are kids learning and gaining the critical thinking skills that they need to succeed? Now, these are the kinds of assessments that our States should be putting in place, and we're setting up a separate competition where they can win grants, extra grants to help them do just that.

So standards and assessments, that's the first measure; are we doing that well? If the State wants to get a Race to the Top grant, they've got to do that well. And because we know that from the moment our kids enter a school, the most important factor in their success—other than their parents—is the person standing in front of the classroom, the teacher, the second measure is whether a State is committed to putting effective teachers in its classrooms and effective principals at the helm of its schools.

Now, it's time to start taking this commitment seriously. We've got to do a better job recruiting and preparing new teachers. We've got to do a better job of rewarding outstanding teachers. And I've got to be honest, we've got to do a better job of moving bad teachers out of the classroom once they've been given an opportunity to do it right.

And that means creating alternate pathways to teaching for talented young people by expanding programs like the one used in Boston, where aspiring teachers work side by side with effective mentors in a year-long residency. It means bringing quality teachers in—it means bringing quality teachers to the neighborhoods that need them the most, because right now a lot of what happens is, is that some of the best teachers, as they get seniority, they move on to the places, the school districts that pay better and, frankly, are easier to teach in. And we've got to give them some incentives to stay so that the kids who need the most help are getting some of the best teachers.

It means boosting the numbers of quality teachers who can help our special education and English language learners meet high standards. And you've done that here at Wright, so congratulations on that. It means improving instruction in science, technology, reading, math, and ensuring that more women and people of color are doing well in those subjects. So that's the second factor.

Third factor, third measure we'll use in this Race to the Top competition, is whether States are tracking the progress of our students and teachers to make sure every child graduates ready for college and a career. So, as I said earlier, before a State can even apply for a grant, it has to change any laws that prevent us from factoring in the performance of students when they're evaluating their teachers. But that's not enough. If a State wants to increase its chances of actually winning a grant, it's going to have to do more. It's going to have to collect information about how students are doing in a particular year and over the course of an academic career and make this information available to teachers so they can use it to improve the way they teach.

One of the things that teachers get so frustrated about is these standardized tests come at a time when it's too late to use to actually help the students improve their performance. So if we're going to collect data on how kids are doing, let's make sure the teachers have it in usable form so that they can actually start doing a better job.

Now, that's how teachers can determine what they should be doing differently in the classroom. That's how principals can determine what changes need to be made in our schools. And that's how school districts can determine what they need to be doing better to prepare our teachers and principals.

Now, even with stronger standards, better assessments, outstanding teachers, some schools will still be difficult to turn around. I want us to be honest about this. There are some schools that are starting in a tough position: a lot of kids coming from impoverished backgrounds; a lot of kids coming in that may have not gotten the kind of head start that they needed; they start school already behind. And even though there are heroic teachers and principals in many of these schools, the fact is that they need some extra help.

And that's why the fourth measure we'll use in awarding Race to the Top grants is whether a State is focused on transforming not just its high-performing schools, not just the middle-of-the-pack schools, but the lowest performing schools. We'll look at whether they're willing to remake a school from top to bottom with new leaders and a new way of teaching, replacing a school's principal if it's not working and at least half its staff—[*applause*]—close a school for a time and then reopen it under new management, even shut down the school entirely and send its schools—send its students to a better school nearby.

I mean, there's always excuses for why these schools can't perform. But part of what we want is an environment in which everybody agrees—from the Governor to the school superintendent, teachers, principals, and most importantly, parents and students—that there's no excuse for mediocrity. And we will take drastic steps when schools aren't working.

So these are the kinds of vigorous strategies that are necessary to turn around our most troubled schools: transforming our lowest performing schools; using timely information to improve the way we teach our children; outstanding teachers and principals in our classrooms and our schools that are getting the support they need; higher standards and better assessments that prepare our kids for life beyond a classroom. These are the challenges, the four challenges that States have to take up if they want to win a Race to the Top award. And these are the four challenges that our country has to meet for our children to outcompete workers around the world, for our economy to grow and to prosper, and for America to lead in the 21st century.

Now, let me just close by saying this, and I've said this before, but I never miss an opportunity to impress this upon an audience. Lifting up American education is not a task for government alone. It will take parents getting more involved in their child's education. It will take schools doing more to reach out with parents. It will take students, students, accepting more responsibility for their own education.

I was explaining to them that education is not saying where, you know, you just tilt your ear and you just pour it in your ear. [*Laughter*] You've got to be an active participant in wanting to get an education.

These aren't in my prepared remarks, but I think it's important to note that Malia and Sasha are just wonderful kids, and Michelle is a

wonderful mother. But in our own household, with all the privileges and opportunities that we have, there are times—look, there are times when kids slack off. There are times where they would rather be watching TV or playing a computer game than hitting the books. And part of our job as parents—Michelle and my job—is not just to tell our kids what to do, but to start instilling in them a sense that they want to do it for themselves.

So Malia came home the other day. She had gotten a 73 on her science test. Now, she's a sixth grader. There was a time a couple years ago when she came home with like an 80-something, and she said, "I did pretty well." And I said, "No, no, no—that's"—I said, "Our goal is 90 percent and up."

Here is the interesting thing. She started internalizing that. So she came, and she was depressed, "I got a 73." And I said, "Well, what happened?" "Well, the teacher—the study guide didn't match up with what was on the test." "So what's your idea here?" "Well, I'm going to start—I've got to read the whole chapter. I'm going to change how I study, how I approach it." So she came home yesterday, she was—"I got a 95." Right? So she was high-fiving.

But here's the point. She said, "I just like having knowledge." That's what she said. And what was happening was she had started wanting it more than us. Now, once you get to that point, our kids are on our wave. But the only way they get to that point is if we're helping them get to that point. So it's going to take that kind of effort from parents to set a high bar in the household. Don't just expect teachers to set a high bar. You've got to set a high bar in the household all across America.

It will take teachers unions and parents and elected leaders working together as partners in common effort, not seeing each other as antagonists, but all of us having the same goal. It will take each and every one of us doing our part on behalf of our children and our country and the future that we share.

I'll never forget a moment many years ago; this is long before I ran for President, before I ran for elected office. I was just starting out as a community organizer in Chicago. And we had set up a meeting to figure out how to rebuild our neighborhoods that I was working in, very impoverished neighborhoods on the south side. And nobody showed up to the meeting. This is my first big meeting; nobody showed up. So I was pretty depressed. I had some community leaders, some volunteers who had helped me try to organize this thing, and they were depressed. They felt so defeated they were talking about quitting. Everybody was too apathetic; they said, "There's no point in trying."

But then I looked outside as I was listening to them talk, and I saw some young boys playing in a vacant lot across the street, and they were just throwing rocks at an old apartment building that was boarded up. And those boys reminded me of me, who didn't have a father in the house and who got in some trouble when he was young. And I turned to those volunteers, and I said, "Before we quit, I want to ask you a question. What's going to happen to those boys if we quit, if we give up on them?" And I thought, if we can't see that we have got a stake in those young boys, if we're not willing to do our part on their behalf, if we fail to recognize that the fight for their future is the fight for our own future, well, who is going to do it?

So one by one, those volunteers, they stayed. Family by family, we reached out to the community. Slowly people started coming to meetings. Block by block, we helped to turn those neighborhoods around and helped to improve some of those schools in the area.

And that's the common spirit—the spirit of common purpose that all of us have to have in America today. And I'm absolutely confident that if we're all willing to come together and embrace that spirit—in the living room, in the classroom, and the statehouse, on Capitol Hill—then not only will we see our students reaching farther, not only will we see our schools performing better, not only are we going to help ensure our children outcompete workers abroad and that America outcompetes nations, but we're going to protect the dream of our founding and give all of our children, every last one of them, a fair chance and an equal start in the race to life.

Thank you very much, everybody. All right. Thank you. God bless, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m.

Statement on the 30th Anniversary of the Seizure of the United States Embassy in Tehran, Iran
November 4, 2009

Thirty years ago today, the American Embassy in Tehran was seized. The 444 days that began on November 4, 1979, deeply affected the lives of courageous Americans who were unjustly held hostage, and we owe these Americans and their families our gratitude for their extraordinary service and sacrifice.

This event helped set the United States and Iran on a path of sustained suspicion, mistrust, and confrontation. I have made it clear that the United States of America wants to move beyond this past and seeks a relationship with the Islamic Republic of Iran based upon mutual interests and mutual respect. We do not interfere in Iran's internal affairs. We have condemned terrorist attacks against Iran. We have recognized Iran's international right to peaceful nuclear power. We have demonstrated our willingness to take confidence-building steps along with others in the international community. We have accepted a proposal by the International Atomic Energy Agency to meet Iran's request for assistance in meeting the medical needs of its people. We have made clear that if Iran lives up to the obligations that every nation has, it will have a path to a more prosperous and productive relationship with the international community.

Iran must choose. We have heard for 30 years what the Iranian Government is against; the question now is what kind of future it is for. The American people have great respect for the people of Iran and their rich history. The world continues to bear witness to their powerful calls for justice and their courageous pursuit of universal rights. It is time for the Iranian Government to decide whether it wants to focus on the past, or whether it will make the choices that will open the door to greater opportunity, prosperity, and justice for its people.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Persian language version of this statement.

Remarks at a White House Event Celebrating Classical Music
November 4, 2009

Thank you. Thank you so much. Everybody, please have a seat. Well, welcome to the White House. Michelle and I are delighted to host the fourth evening in a series showcasing the achievements of American musicians.

I'd like to welcome the many Members of Congress who've joined us tonight. Despite what you may have heard, they are actually a civilized bunch. [*Laughter*] Please join me in acknowledging our outstanding Secretary of Veterans Affairs Ric Shinseki is here as well, doing a tremendous job on behalf of our wounded warriors. I would also like to welcome the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, a group of men and women dedicated to inspiring creative endeavors and strengthening America's deep commitment to the arts. And I understand that you had a wonderful program this afternoon and this morning with Michelle.

It's been a busy day of classical music here at the White House. Earlier, more than 100 students participated in a terrific workshop and concert led by tonight's performers. I want to thank those performers for coming to share their passion and their talent with us tonight: Joshua Bell, Sharon Isbin, Awadagin Pratt, and Alisa Weilerstein.

Any one of them would tell you that they're only here because of the hard work, dedication, and the fact that somebody along the way was

there for them. So I want to thank them for setting an important example for our gifted young musicians, who someday might be performing up here themselves.

Tonight's performance also continues a long tradition of sorts in the East Room. Over 120 years ago, the first formal concert was held here as President Chester A. Arthur and guests listened to Her Majesty's Opera Company performing the works of Mozart, Verdi, and Wagner. Since then, it's earned a rich history as a venue for White House concerts, and especially for those dedicated to classical music. From Van Cliburn to Yo-Yo Ma to our own Marine Chamber Orchestra and Marine Chamber Ensembles, this room has been a stage for some of the Nation's most accomplished classical musicians.

Now, if any of you in the audience are newcomers to classical music and aren't sure when to applaud, don't be nervous. [*Laughter*] Apparently, President Kennedy had the same problem. [*Laughter*] He and Jackie held several classical music events here, and more than once he started applauding when he wasn't supposed to. [*Laughter*] So the social secretary worked out a system where she'd signal him—[*laughter*]—through a crack in the door to the Cross Hall.

Now, fortunately, I have Michelle to tell me when to applaud. [*Laughter*] The rest of you are on your own. [*Laughter*]

This is, of course, a unique concert venue. But tonight, all across America, in community centers and concert halls, in homes and in schools, the sounds of classical music are lifting hearts and spurring imagination, just as they always have. And it's easy to understand why. There's precision, of course, but there's also great feeling and improvisation. There's structure, but there's also creativity. It's music that defies simple definition even as it speaks to a common, universal language.

So whether you are new to classical music, or have been an aficionado for many, many years, we hope that you enjoy tonight.

Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:15 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to musicians Yo-Yo Ma and Harvey L. "Van" Cliburn, Jr.

Remarks at the Opening of the White House Tribal Nations Conference and a Discussion With Tribal Leaders
November 5, 2009

The President. Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat. Thank you to Jefferson Keel, thanks for the wonderful introduction; to Clarence Jackson for the invocation. Good morning to all of you. I am honored to be with you today at this unique and historic event, the largest and most widely attended gathering of tribal leaders in our history. And I am so grateful to many Members of Congress who could join us today, along with several members of my Cabinet who will be participating in this conference today.

You know, a couple of summers ago, I had the opportunity to visit the Crow Nation in Montana. And while I was there, I was adopted into the nation by a wonderful couple, Hartford and Mary Black Eagle. And I know what they're saying now: "Kids grow up so fast." [*Laughter*] Only in America could the adoptive son of Crow Indians grow up to become President of the United States.

It's now been a year since the American people went to the polls and gave me this extraordinary privilege and responsibility. And part of what accounts for the hope people felt on that day, I think, was a sense that we had an opportunity to change the way Washington worked, a chance to make our Federal Government the servant not of special interests, but of the American people. It was a sense that we had an opportunity to bring about meaningful change for those who had for too long been excluded from the American Dream.

And few have been more marginalized and ignored by Washington for as long as Native Americans, our first Americans. We know the

history that we share. It's a history marked by violence and disease and deprivation. Treaties were violated; promises were broken. You were told your lands, your religion, your cultures, your languages were not yours to keep. And that's a history that we've got to acknowledge if we are to move forward.

We also know our more recent history, one in which too often, Washington thought it knew what was best for you. There was too little consultation between governments. And that's a major reason why things are the way they are today. Some of your reservations face unemployment rates of up to 80 percent. Roughly a quarter of all Native Americans live in poverty. More than 14 percent of all reservation homes don't have electricity, and 12 percent don't have access to a safe water supply. In some reservations as many as 20 people live together just to get by. Without real communication and consultation, we're stuck year after year with policies that don't work on issues specific to you and on broader issues that affect all of us. And you deserve to have a voice in both.

I know that you may be skeptical that this time will be any different. And you have every right to be, and nobody would have blamed you if you didn't come today, but you did. And I know what an extraordinary leap of faith that is on your part.

And that's why I want you to know that I'm absolutely committed to moving forward with you and forging a new and better future together. It's a commitment that's deeper than our unique nation-to-nation relationship. It's a commitment to getting this relationship right, so that you can be full partners in the American economy and so your children and your grandchildren can have a equal shot at pursuing the American Dream. And that begins by fulfilling the promises I made to you during my campaign.

I promised you a voice on my senior staff in the White House so that you'd have a seat at the table when important decisions are being made about your lives, your nations, and your people. And that's why I appointed Kimberly Teehee of the Cherokee Nation as my Native American policy adviser and Jodi Gillette of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe to work directly with all of you. That's why Secretary Salazar and I selected Larry Echo Hawk of the Pawnee Nation to serve as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs here at Interior. And they are doing great work so far.

I also told you that we'd shake up the bureaucracy and get policymakers out of Washington so they could hear directly from you about your hopes, your dreams, and the obstacles that keep you from pursuing them. Secretary Salazar in particular has helped lead a comprehensive outreach to tribal communities, and Attorney General Eric Holder, Energy Secretary Steven Chu, HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, along with several members of my staff, have held listening sessions on American Indian and Alaska Native issues around the country and at the White House.

I promised you we'd host this conference to develop an agenda that works for your communities, because I believe Washington can't—and shouldn't—dictate a policy agenda for Indian Country. Tribal nations do better when they make their own decisions. That's why we're here today.

And I want to be clear about this: Today's summit is not lip service. We're not going to go through the motions and pay tribute to one another, and then furl up the flags and go our separate ways. Today's sessions are part of a lasting conversation that's crucial to our shared future.

Now, Secretary Salazar and Assistant Secretary EchoHawk are among the best advocates you could have in Washington, and this Department is doing fantastic work under their leadership. But being good partners with tribal nations is a responsibility we've all got to take on. And that's why representatives of multiple agencies are here today, because if we're going to address the needs of Native Americans in a comprehensive way, then we've got to mount a comprehensive response.

A major step toward living up to that responsibility is the Presidential memorandum that I'll be signing at this desk in just a few moments. In the final years of his administration, President Clinton issued an Executive order establishing regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration between your nations and the Federal

Government. But over the past 9 years, only a few agencies have made an effort to implement that Executive order, and it's time for that to change.

So the memorandum I'll sign directs every Cabinet agency to give me a detailed plan within 90 days of how—the full implementation of that Executive order and how we're going to improve tribal consultation. After all, there are challenges we can only solve by working together, and we face a serious set of issues right now.

We face our economic crisis, in which we took bold and swift action, including in your communities. We allocated more than $3 billion of the Recovery Act to help with some of your most pressing needs, like rebuilding and renovating schools on reservations across the country. We provided more than $100 million in loans to spur job creation in tribal economies. And we made sure my budget included significant increases in funding for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Indian Health Service, and other agencies that have critical roles to play in your communities.

But if we're going to bring real and lasting change for Native Americans, we need a comprehensive strategy, as I said before. Part of that strategy is health care. We know that as long as Native Americans die of illnesses like tuberculosis, alcoholism, diabetes, pneumonia, and influenza at far higher rates than the rest of the population, then we're going to have to do more to address disparities in health care delivery.

More than half of all Native Americans and Alaska Natives, especially those in remote areas with limited access to care, rely on the Indian Health Service for their most basic needs. And that's why we invested $500 million under the Recovery Act in strengthening and modernizing the IHS, and that's why my budget proposes a increase of 13 percent in IHS funding.

We're also closer than ever to passing health insurance reform that will finally make quality insurance affordable to all Americans who don't have coverage and finally offer stability and security to Americans who do, and that includes our first Americans.

When it comes to creating jobs, closing the opportunity gap, and leaving something better for our future generations, few areas hold as much promise as clean energy. Up to 15 percent of our potential wind energy resources are on Native American land, and the potential for solar energy is even higher. But too often, you face unique hurdles to developing these renewable resources. And that's why I'm very proud—under Secretary Salazar's leadership, we're looking for new opportunities to ensure that you have a say in planning for access to the transmission grid. We're streamlining and expediting the permit process for energy development and transmission across tribal lands. We are securing tribal access to financing and investments for new energy projects. And thanks to the Recovery Act, we've established an energy auditor training program that could prepare Native Americans for the green jobs of the future. And that's going to be absolutely important.

But the future of Indian Country rests on something more: the education we provide our children. We know that Native Americans face some of the lowest matriculation rates and highest high school and college dropout rates. And that's why the Recovery Act also included $170 million for Indian education and $277 million for Indian school construction. And that's why my budget provided $50 million in advanced funding for tribal colleges that are often economic lifelines for a community. Students who study at a tribal college are eight times less likely to drop out of higher education, they continue on to a 4-year institution at a higher rate than students in community colleges, and nearly 80 percent end up in careers that help their tribal nation.

And none of our efforts will take root if we can't even guarantee that our communities are safe: safe places to learn, safe places to grow, safe places to thrive. And on some reservations, violent crime is more than 20 times the national average. The shocking and contemptible fact that one in three Native American women will be raped in their lifetimes is an assault on our national conscience that we can no longer ignore.

So tribes need support in strengthening their law enforcement capability. They need better resources and more training. And my administration fully appreciates the complexity and challenges you face when it comes to the criminal justice system on tribal lands. And we need to have a serious conversation with regard to all aspects of your public safety, and that's a conversation my administration is committed to doing.

So this is a challenge we take very seriously. The Department of Justice, the Department of the Interior, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of Health and Human Services are all working on ways to empower tribal governments to ensure greater safety in their own communities, and I want to particularly commend Attorney General Eric Holder for his efforts on this so far. I also strongly support the Tribal Law and Order Act, and I thank Chairman Dorgan and Representative Herseth Sandlin for their leadership on this issue. And I look forward to Congress passing it so I can sign it into law.

So there's a lot of work to be done today. But before we get at it, I want to close with this. I know you've heard this song from Washington before. I know you've often heard grand promises that sound good but rarely materialize. And each time, you're told this time will be different. But over the last few years, I've had a chance to speak with Native American leaders across the country about the challenges you face, and those conversations have been deeply important to me.

I get it. I'm on your side. I understand what it means to be an outsider. I was born to a teenage mother. My father left when I was 2 years old, leaving her—my mother and my grandparents to raise me. We didn't have much. We moved around a lot. So even though our experiences are different, I understand what it means to be on the outside looking in. I know what it means to feel ignored and forgotten and what it means to struggle. So you will not be forgotten as long as I'm in this White House. All right. Thank you.

Together—working together, we're going to make sure that the first Americans, along with all Americans, get the opportunities they deserve. So with that, if I'm not mistaken, I am in a position now to start signing this memorandum, and then we're going to do a little Q&A. So get everything set up. How many pens do you want me to use?

White House staff member. Eight.

Eight pens—[*laughter*]—I don't know who's getting the pens, but——

[*At this point, the President signed the memorandum.*]

The President. This is harder than it looks. [*Laughter*] There you go. Done.

Thank you. All right, I think that we've got some time for questions and answers. If you've got the questions, then if I don't have the answers, somebody here does. [*Laughter*] So——

Audience member. Are you coming to Alaska?

The President. We're—hold it. We're—no shouting now. [*Laughter*] But I would love to come to Alaska, absolutely.

So everybody have a seat, and Jefferson, how are we working this? Do you get the first question?

Jefferson Keel. Yes, sir, Mr. President.

The President. He's got—he's a big cheese, so he gets the first question. [*Laughter*] Go ahead.

Federal-Tribal Relations

Mr. Keel. Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, I want to thank you for honoring your commitments that you've made to restore the Federal Government's trust, responsibility, and the important relationship between Indian nations and the United States.

We've seen you honor your commitments in the appointments you've made to the many Native American people serving in your administration; we certainly appreciate that. But also, we've seen improvements in the budgets for Indian programs, and we're certainly appreciative of that.

As the president of the National Congress of American Indians, I've been asked to make a request on the fundamental issues. Tribes across the country strongly support the creation of the Executive order you just mentioned, and

we're certainly proud of that, reaffirming the inherent sovereign status of our nations and renewing the pledge to honor the treaties and to trust responsibility. We particularly hope for the establishment of real mechanisms for accountability, not only for this administration but set a path for the future.

We request that you address the issues of Indian lands and the trust responsibility. We need to restore tribal lands that have been taken away. We need to change the management that exists on existing tribal lands. There's so much potential for economic development. We ask that the Federal Government become a partner in that journey. We particularly thank you for the administration's support for the Carcieri solution.

And finally, Mr. President, we know that you've made significant pledges and commitments to Indian country, and we want to honor you by saying thank you for those commitments. But more than that, we respect you as a man of your word. You've restored hope to the Indian communities, and we want to thank you for restoring that, not only just by your words, but by your actions. Thank you again, Mr. President.

The President. I appreciate that. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Okay, who's next? There are mikes in there, so—please introduce yourself, by the way to the——

Federal-Tribal Relations/Continued and Future Implementation of Existing Laws

Q. Good morning, Mr. President, President Obama. I am the Vice President of the Navajo Nation. I got one small question to you. I watched the message you gave us a while ago. It's very good; I like it. And your commitment—you have fulfilled your commitment. But one thing I'm worried about, on behalf of all the nation here and also the Navajo Nation, what this administration—you went and reached out to the Native American nation, which you're doing it now. It would be nice, it would be—if you could work with us, with the congressional people, and make it a mandate that we should—that the United States Government should work with the Indian nation, because every 4 years—and I know you're going to win your reelection; you have another—some numbers of years. But the thing I'm worried about is the end of the term and what happens with all the plans that we're going to be putting together with your administration—our administration. I supported you, and the Navajo Nation did. What happened to all that?

I really don't want to stand here and complain about we've been lied to again. Through the histories of all Indian tribe—the treaty that were made between the United States and Indian tribe, it's been broken a lot. How can we make it so solid that it stays there, no matter who, what administration comes in? And I think we need to work on that, sir.

The President. Well, I appreciate that. Look, obviously, the executive branch's job is to implement law. Now, a lot of these treaties, a lot of these consultations are embedded in law, and we've got to make sure that they're implemented. So for the next 8 years—the next 4 years, at least—[*laughter*]—let me not jump the gun—for the next 3 years and 1 month—[*laughter*]—that I'm assured of this current position, we are going to make sure that we put the infrastructure and the framework in place so that a new dynamic, a new set of relationships have been established.

And to the extent that we can partner with Congress to lock some of those good habits in and end some of the bad habits that we've seen in the past, that's something that we'll be very interested in doing.

So I think that should be part of the agenda of consultation over the next several years, is how do we continue to institutionalize some of the best practices of consultation and collaboration and partnership that's so important. So thank you so much.

All right? I want to make sure that some folks in the back get—are there any other microphones here? Is this the only one? Okay, because the—I'm going to go ahead and call on this gentleman, but I don't want everybody just in the front seat to get a question, so go ahead.

Situation of Alaska Natives/The President's Intention To Visit Alaska

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. And thank you for fulfilling your commitment to meet with the tribes in the very first year of your administration. We really appreciate it. My name is Bill Martin. I'm President of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, but today I represent all the native peoples of Alaska. I present to you our request for assistance.

We ask that you strengthen and support our sovereignty for all Alaska tribes by supporting our fishing and subsistence rights; by providing equity and funding across all tribal government; providing an infrastructure of basic services in our villages, of plumbing in town hall meetings, in roads, sewer, et cetera; provide adequate emergency response for suicide prevention and health care services. Suicide is a very high rate in Alaska. It's—for all of Alaska, is twice the national average. For natives, it's five times the average. And for young men between 15 and 27, it's 12 times the national average. And it's a serious issue, and we hope that we can be able to provide more funding to combat suicide.

I'd like you to help us by providing opportunities to enhance education, cultural language teachings within our community. Many Indians and Alaska Natives live in third world countries. There is a great poverty of unsustainable economies in Indian Country. There is a lack of capital.

Before the economic crisis, bank lending was very weak to nonexistent for tribal businesses. In similar conditions in underdeveloped countries, the United States offers effective programs to induce economic investments, two programs like the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and the Export-Import Bank. We ask that you commit to develop similar federally backed institutions designed specifically for tribes, Alaska Natives, Alaska Native corporations.

We ask for—that you work with us to stop the disastrous erosion caused by global warming. Many of our villages are ready to slide off into the waters of Alaska, and in some cases, there will be absolutely no hope; we will need to move many villages.

We ask you to ensure tribal and rural equity for Alaska tribes, meaning those that live in the urban areas and also in the rural areas; support Alaska tribes to promote self-determination for all of Alaska people; to help and promote public safety from child abuse, from spousal abuse.

And finally, Mr. President, Alaska is a great land. Were it superimposed on a map of the continental United States, it would stretch from Florida to California, from North Dakota to Texas. And the peoples of Alaska are just as different as the differences in this whole country, but we stand united. We stand united in the pursuit of happiness for our families and to train them and bring them as we were brought up for hundreds and hundreds of years since time immemorial. And we stand united in inviting you to visit this great land.

Every Alaska Native has that special place to go to get away from it all. And if you ever decide to want to get away from it all, come see one of us. [*Laughter*] We'll take you to that special place.

The President. All right. Well, I often want to get away from it all. [*Laughter*] So I'm very much looking forward to visiting Alaska. Thank you for sharing that important information with us. One thing I'd note that, obviously, you guys are going to be here all day, so some of these key written statements you're going to be able to present to not only the relevant White House staff but also the Secretaries that were—that are going to be participating, as well as Members of Congress who are participating.

The only thing I do want to make sure you understand is when I do visit Alaska, it's going to be during the summer. [*Laughter*] So I just wanted to be clear about that.

Okay. This—sorry, I'm getting old, so—there you go. Go ahead.

Trust Status of Former Tribal Lands/Improvement of Federal-Tribal Cooperation

Q. Good morning.

The President. Good morning.

Q. Honorable President Barack Obama, he who cares——

[*The participant made brief remarks in his native language, and no translation was provided. He then continued in English, as follows*]

It's good to see you today. My name is Wilfrid Cleveland from the Ho-Chunk Nation, President of the Ho-Chunk Nation, the Bear Clan, from the State of Wisconsin.

Our people had organized a government in 1963. Topics that they discussed was land, health, education, employment, unemployment. And today we come here before you with those same concerns, 46 years later. So these are—in our ceremonies at home, in our hearts, we talk—we think about that today would be a day different from day when our elders, when our ancestors, made treaties with the United States. They were broken; they were not honored, but today would be different.

We have entitlements for these programs that are given to us. Rather than being able to come to you and compete with other tribes, each tribe should be entitled to all these as part of the trust responsibility. So we ask that you would make this possible for us so that we would be having a good relationship with one another when we come to meetings.

And, Mr. President, we have our—we are not—we were not born owners of these lands, but stewards. Today, we have to purchase our lands back, and we have this process of putting our land back into trust—[*inaudible*]—trust process, and that's a long process that is there. A part of it is—part of this process is giving States, county, and even local governments an opportunity to say whether these lands can go into trust or not. Now I ask you, is that nation-to-nation relationship?

Each of our nations have warriors, and today I name a few of those warriors: I name Roger Jourdain, he was the chairman of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa; I name Wendell Chino, he was the chairman of the Mescalero Apache Nation; Vice President Hubert Humphrey; Senator Ted Kennedy; the then-Senator Walter Mondale. Each of these warriors gave their full support to the advancement of all Native nations. We today are here to follow in those footprints so that our people can enjoy our sovereignty.

The U.S. Government was formed with a native concept. Today, we, the Native nations, have formed governments, and we must continuously fight to maintain our sovereignty and our lands we were once stewards of. We must have the same relationship with the Federal Government as the States. We must not be restricted under the watchdog of the BIA, but rather be enhanced with a nation-to-nation relationship.

We tribal leaders understand the task you face in the steering the country out of the difficult times that we are in. However, on your visit to the Crow Reservation, you told those gathered that you intend to acknowledge the tragic history of Native Americans over the past three centuries, then promising during these—we will continue to support you and your administration during these challenging times as you walk with us to make us stronger nations for our future generations. Thank you for your time.

The President. All right, thank you. Thank you.

Let's see if—I want to get a woman's voice in here. [*Laughter*] So how about this young lady right here? Right there in the blue.

Message for the President

Q. Hi. My name is Alicia Reft. I'm the President of the Karluk IRA Traditional Council. Karluk is a small village in Kodiak Island, Alaska. And I have lots to say, but the two most important things were that my two nephews from home wanted me to shake your hand if I can, and an elder that works at Safeway—her name's Erlinda—she said to make sure and say hi and that she loves you very much.

The President. Well, you tell Linda I love her back. [*Laughter*]

Q. Thank you.

The President. Thank you.

All right, the—right there in the red, right in the middle.

Federal-Tribal Relations/Support for American Indian Children

[*The participant made brief remarks in her native language, and no translation was provided. She then continued in English, as follows*]

Q. My name is Theresa Two Bulls. I'm President of the Oglala Sioux Tribe from the State of South Dakota and a member of the Great Plains Tribal Chairman's Association. Thank you for meeting with us today, for opening up your heart. It's good to hear your words. They're dear to our hearts.

I come on two issues—honor the treaties. Too long have—they have been not honored by the Federal Government. And you talk about a change—now is the change. Allow us and work with us to exercise our sovereignty, our self-determination.

And the second issue is our children. Our children are sacred. We want the best for them. And we ask that you help us to ensure a better education, a better life, well being for our children, because they're going to be the future leaders.

And I say thank you, and we love you.

[*The participant continued in her native language, and no translation was provided.*]

The President. Thank you. All right. Let's see, the gentleman right there—right here in front. Yes.

Tribal Lands and Environmental Management

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President. My name is John Berrey. I'm the chairman of the Quapaw Tribe in Oklahoma. And on behalf of the other Oklahoma tribes, I want to thank you for coming here today.

I have one request. The Quapaw Tribe has the honor of having the largest Superfund site in the United States; it's Tar Creek Superfund site. We have 72 million tons of mining waste on our lands. And I would like to ask you to come visit it and see the devastation caused by this management of tribal resources and help elevate tribes to the same level of States when we're dealing with the remediation of Superfund sites so we can have the same voice as the State in designing a better future and environment for our people.

Thank you.

The President. Good. Well, this is really important. Obviously, the whole issue of environmental integrity on tribal lands is something that too often has slipped through the cracks or decisions have been made in the absence of consultation with the tribes. So this is going to be a top priority generally—improving our environmental quality. The issue of climate change is something that we are working diligently on, and everybody has a huge interest in this, no place more so than Alaska, where the effects are already beginning to be felt, and it's starting to change, I think, the ability of native peoples to—whose economies oftentimes may be based on interacting with the natural environment there. They're already starting to have to make significant changes that have to be addressed.

So my hope is one of the things that will be taking place during today's session and then continuing is you've got a great Secretary of the Interior who cares about natural resources. But we've also got an outstanding EPA Director in Lisa Jackson. And figuring out how we can improve environmental coordination with the tribal nations so that we're matching the energy agenda that I already spoke about in my speech with an environmental agenda, I think, is going to be not only good for native peoples, it's also going to be good for the United States generally. And we have a lot to learn from your nations in order to create the kind of sustainability in our environment that is—we so desperately need.

So I will make sure that somebody follows up directly with your tribe on this Superfund site. All right. Uh-oh, now everybody is raising their hand. [*Laughter*]

All right, this young lady right here. Yes.

Impact of Offshore Drilling on Alaska Native Communities

Q. Thank you. Thank you for this opportunity. Thank you, Mr. President. I'm so privileged and honored to be here. My name is Caroline Cannon, President for the Native Village of Point Hope. I came here with a message from

my tribe, that we are impacted with the offshore drilling, the decision that's been made on behalf of our tribe during the Bush administration. And we would like you to overturn that.

I live in the coastal village and exactly where climate change has a big impact. We are a whaling community, and we need help. It's happening so fast that last year—a couple of years ago, there were some incidents that occurred because of the ice condition during the whaling season, so I would like help. And I think that—we also are around the coast of the Red Dog Mine, and they have decided that they're going to have a discharge pipeline to our ocean, where we highly rely on our food resources.

So thank you again. And my 7-year-son, Jalen Calen—Cannon, says, big hello. He said I should give you a hug, but I know that's not an opportunity right now. [*Laughter*] But thank you.

The President. Maybe after the Q&A, I'll get that hug in. [*Laughter*] I want you to know, just with respect to offshore drilling, Secretary Salazar is in the process of reviewing some of the directives that were issued under the previous administration. And I am confident that as part of that overarching review, that consultation with potentially affected nations will be part of Ken's process.

So okay, you know, let's see, this gentleman right here with the headdress.

Tribal Land Development/Mineral Rights/Housing

Q. Honorable President Obama, this is the second time I get a chance to address you. I've been wearing this war bonnet, and I've been really displeasing these gentle ladies behind me, but this is yours. In our Hidatsa, Mandan, and Arikara ways, you don't give a gift to a tent, you give it to the individual. You are our Commander in Chief for the soldiers; I'm a lieutenant in the Army Reserve. My name is Ee-Ba-Da-Gish, White-Headed Eagle. I am the chairman of the Three Affiliated Tribes, the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara. My name is Marcus Dominick Levings. I first met you in Grand Forks at your VIP room. My mother is Dowah Rezilda Brady Wells. She gave you the red, white, and blue star quilt——

The President. Yes, it was beautiful.

Q. ——with all the prayers. She sent this to you as well, so I'll give it to whatever Secret Service people I need to do that. [*Laughter*]

President Obama, I have two issues for my people, the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara, 11,000 tribal members who live in western North Dakota on top of the Williston Basin, the Bakken Formation. We have oil and gas development today, Mr. President. We have an opportunity to be independent from any means of Federal programs, any type of issues that we had been not needing before the flood of Elbowoods, North Dakota, in the 1950s. In the spirit of progress, our elders, our ancestors gave up their bottom land. Ninety percent of our people live there, Mr. President. And now they're up on high hilltops, 77-below wind chill factors in winter.

We are the tribe, the Mandan, Hidatsas, and Arikaras, who saved Lewis and Clark. We were the ones who made it so they can go out to blaze the trail to Portland. Now we come for you to ask for some help on our energy development, to get the 49-step process eliminated so our elders, who are dying as we speak, can generate opportunities to receive royalties on their minerals.

Second, with all this economic development boom that's going on, Mr. President, in the Williston Basin and Fort Berthold Reservation, 1 million acres, we need homes. We are short 1,000 homes, Mr. President, home ownership and rentals as well. So on behalf of the Tribal Business Council and my elders, I stand humbly in front of you, Ee-Ba-Da-Gish, and ask for your help. Thank you.

[*The participant made brief remarks in his native language, and no translation was provided.*]

The President. Thank you. I've got time only for one more question unfortunately, and I'm not going to be able to get to everybody, so right there in the middle, right there in the middle.

Tribal Lands

Q. Persistence, and that's a characteristic of all Native Americans. That's why I stood there for a long time.

So thank you very much, Mr. President, for meeting with us today on this historical day. And we are truly grateful for this opportunity. My name is Leslie Lohse. I'm with the Paskenta Nomlaki in California. And in California, there are many landless tribes. We do have gaming out there, and I would ask that you ask the Secretary of Interior to make some policies that are much more clarifying in getting our lands into trust, because it's causing some issues out there between the gaming tribes—maybe nine gaming tribes—and with the local communities and our State itself. So we ask that you ask them to make these things more clearly for all of us to abide by.

And another thing that I'd like to ask you to do is to take care of our 8(a) program because those of us that—those that are landless out there can develop economic development opportunities through the 8(a) contracting program, and that may ease some of the burdens that some of the landless tribes are, because you don't need to have land to operate that.

So—and there is an attack on our 8(a) program—I perceive it as an attack—because it is limiting. We just barely started 3 years ago with ours, and we're starting to get rolling, and now they want to change the rules. So I ask that you pay mind to that, that we not inhibit our growth in that way so that we can purchase some of our lands back and grow from that, instead of being dependent on gaming.

The President. Okay. Well, listen, I am so grateful that all of you are here. I appreciate what you've shared with me. But the most important opportunity that you will have today is to interact directly with the Department heads, the Secretaries who are in charge of implementation on a whole range of these issues.

So I want intensive discussion and dialogue with them. Present to them your concerns, your specific recommendations. They are here to listen and to learn and to advise. I am going to meet back up with you at the end of the day. And if you guys have just been partying and not working—[*laughter*]—I'll know. [*Laughter*]

So I hope you have a wonderfully productive conference today. I will see you at the end of it. And, again, I appreciate everything that you guys have done. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:37 a.m. at the Department of the Interior. In his remarks, he referred to Tlingit elder Clarence Jackson, Sr.; White House Senior Policy Adviser for Native American Affairs Kimberly K. Teehee; and Associate Director of the White House Office of Public Engagement and Deputy Associate Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs Jodi Archambault Gillette. The memorandum is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on House of Representatives Action on Health Care Reform Legislation

November 5, 2009

Hi, guys. Hey! Hello, everybody. Please sit down. Good afternoon, everybody. I wanted to come down and just talk a little bit about health care before Robert gives his regular briefing.

I am extraordinarily pleased and grateful to learn that the AARP and the American Medical Association are both supporting the health insurance reform bill that will soon come up to a vote in the House of Representatives.

When it comes to the AARP, this is no small endorsement. For more than 50 years, they have been a leader in the fight to reduce the costs of health care and expand coverage for our senior citizens. They are a nonpartisan organization, and their board made their decision to endorse only after a careful, intensive, objective scrutiny of this bill. They're endorsing this bill because they know it will strengthen Medicare, not jeopardize it. They know it will protect the benefits our seniors receive, not cut them. So I want everybody to remember that the next time you hear the same tired arguments to the

contrary from the insurance companies and their lobbyists. And remember this endorsement the next time you see a bunch of misleading ads on television.

The AARP knows this bill will make health care more affordable. They know it will make coverage more secure. They know it's a good deal for our seniors. And that's why we're thrilled that they're standing up for this effort.

The same is true for the doctors and medical professionals who are supporting this bill today. These are men and women who know our health care system best and have been watching this debate closely. They would not be supporting it if they really believed that it would lead to Government bureaucrats making decisions that are best left to doctors. They would not be with us if they believed that reform would in any way damage the critical and sacred doctor-patient relationship.

Instead, they're supporting reform because they've seen firsthand what's broken about our health care system. They've seen what happens when patients can't get the care they need because some insurance company has decided to drop their coverage or water it down. They've seen what happens when a patient is forced to pay out-of-pocket costs of thousands of dollars that she doesn't have to get the treatment she desperately needs. They've seen what happens when patients don't come in for regular checkups or screenings because either their insurance company doesn't cover them or they can't afford health insurance in the first place. And they've seen far, far too much of their time spent filling out forms and haggling with insurance company bureaucrats. So the doctors of America know what needs to be fixed about our health care system. They know that health insurance reform would go a long way toward doing that.

We are closer to passing this reform than ever before. And now that the doctors and medical professionals of America are standing with us, now that the organizations charged with looking out for the interests of seniors are standing with us, we are even closer.

I want to thank both organizations again for their support, and I urge Congress to listen to AARP, listen to the AMA, and pass this reform for hundreds of millions of Americans who will benefit from it. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:20 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to White House Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Seretse Khama Ian Khama of Botswana

November 5, 2009

President Obama. Hello, everybody. I just want to welcome President Khama to the Oval Office and to make a brief statement about Botswana and its relationship to the United States.

Although Botswana is not a large country, it is truly one of the extraordinary success stories in Africa. Since the mid-sixties it has moved on a path of good economic management and outstanding political governance, and as a consequence, you have seen extraordinary improvements in living standards over the last 40 years in Botswana that really are an envy for much of the rest of the continent.

Not only has Botswana shown itself to be an outstanding success, but it's also been a great partner to the United States. And our Governments have cooperated extensively throughout the years. President Khama, I think, has been showing his own extraordinary leadership in helping to move his country forward on a range of issues, from how to deal with the HIV/AIDS crisis, to addressing economic development, to dealing with some of the regional problems that exist. On each of these areas, I think, Botswana has been a real leader.

And so we just want to express our appreciation for the outstanding work that successive Governments in Botswana have been to able

to accomplish. We are grateful for the friendship between the people of the United States and Botswana. And I'm looking forward to continuing that strong partnership in the years to come.

So welcome.

President Khama. Thank you very much. I certainly passed on my appreciation to President Obama for having had the opportunity to meet with him and to share views about the bilateral cooperation that we have had between our two countries: areas on trades, areas on health, and also to share how both countries are tackling this current economic downturn.

And we also had the opportunities to talk about environmental issues, climate change, and the upcoming Copenhagen summit. And lastly, also about regional issues and how we can try and go about entrenching democracy both in the mindset and the way we go about all our activities on the continent, the African Union in particular.

And I would just like to thank you, Mr. President, once again for having given me this opportunity to share my thoughts with you. Thank you very much.

President Obama. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:33 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks at the Closing of the White House Tribal Nations Conference
November 5, 2009

Please, everybody have a seat. Let me first of all just thank Ken and the entire Department of the Interior staff for organizing just an extraordinary conference. I want to thank my Cabinet members and senior administration officials who participated today. I hear that Dr. Joe Medicine Crow was around, and so I want to give a shout-out to that Congressional Medal of Honor [Presidential Medal of Freedom]* winner. Good to see you.

My understanding is, is that you had an extremely productive conference. I want to thank all of you for coming and for your efforts, and I want to give you my solemn guarantee that this is not the end of a process but a beginning of a process, and that we are going to follow up. We are going to follow up. Every single member of my team understands that this is a top priority for us. I want you to know that, as I said this morning, this is not something that we just give lip service to. And we are going to keep on working with you to make sure that the first Americans get the best possible chances in life in a way that's consistent with your extraordinary traditions and culture and values.

Shootings at Fort Hood Army Base in Texas

Now, I have to say, though, that beyond that, I had planned to make some broader remarks about the challenges that lay ahead for Native Americans, as well as collaboration with our administration, but as some of you might have heard, there has been a tragic shooting at the Fort Hood Army base in Texas. We don't yet know all the details at this moment; we will share them as we get them. What we do know is that a number of American soldiers have been killed and even more have been wounded in a horrific outburst of violence.

My immediate thoughts and prayers are with the wounded and with the families of the fallen, and with those who live and serve at Fort Hood. And these are men and women who have made the selfless and courageous decision to risk and at times give their lives to protect the rest of us on a daily basis. It's difficult enough when we lose these brave Americans in battles overseas. It is horrifying that they should come under fire at an Army base on American soil.

* White House correction.

I've spoken to Secretary Gates and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, and I will continue to receive a constant stream of updates as new information comes in. We are working with the Pentagon, the FBI, and the Department of Homeland Security, all to ensure that Fort Hood is secure, and we will continue to support the community with the full resources of the Federal Government.

In the meantime, I would ask all Americans to keep the men and women of Fort Hood in your thoughts and prayers. We will make sure that we get answers to every single question about this horrible incident. And I want all of you to know that as Commander in Chief, there's no greater honor but also no greater responsibility for me than to make sure that the extraordinary men and women in uniform are properly cared for and that their safety and security when they are at home is provided for.

So we are going to stay on this. But I hope in the meantime that all of you recognize the scope of this tragedy and keep everybody in their thoughts and prayers.

Again, thank you for your participation here today. I am confident that this is going to be resulting in terrific work between this Government and your governments in the weeks, the months, and years to come. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:02 p.m. at the Department of the Interior. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Interior Kenneth L. Salazar; and Crow historian and author Joseph Medicine Crow.

Remarks on Signing the Worker, Homeownership, and Business Assistance Act of 2009

November 6, 2009

Shootings at Fort Hood Army Base in Texas

Good morning. I want to begin by offering an update on the tragedy that took place yesterday at Fort Hood.

This morning I met with FBI Director Mueller and the relevant agencies to discuss their ongoing investigation into what caused one individual to turn his gun on fellow service men and women. We don't know all the answers yet, and I would caution against jumping to conclusions until we have all the facts.

What we do know is that there are families, friends, and an entire nation grieving right now for the valiant men and women who came under attack yesterday in one of the worst mass shootings ever to take place on an American military base. So from now until Veterans Day, I've ordered the flags at the White House and other Federal buildings to be flown at halfstaff. This is a modest tribute to those who lost their lives even as many were preparing to risk their lives for their country. And it's also recognition of the men and women who put their lives on the line every day to protect our safety and uphold our values. We honor their service, we stand in awe of their sacrifice, and we pray for the safety of those who fight and for the families of those who have fallen. And as we continue to learn more about what happened at Fort Hood, this administration will continue to provide you updates in the coming days and weeks.

Now, I would also like to announce that I just signed into law a bill that will help grow our economy, save and create new jobs, and provide relief to struggling families and businesses. The need for such a measure was made clear by the jobs report that we received this morning. Although we lost fewer jobs than we did last month, our unemployment rate climbed to over 10 percent, a sobering number that underscores the economic challenges that lie ahead.

When we first came into office, our immediate goal was to stop the freefall that caused our economy to shrink at an alarming rate. We have succeeded in achieving that goal, as our economy grew last quarter for the first time in a year. But history tells us that job growth

always lags behind economic growth, which is why we have to continue to pursue measures that will create new jobs. And I can promise you that I won't let up until the Americans who want to find work can find work and until all Americans can earn enough to raise their families and keep their businesses open.

The bill I signed today will help folks do that while continuing to grow our economy. It's a bill that extends unemployment benefits for up to 20 additional weeks, with the longest extension for the hardest hit States. Already these benefits have helped 16 million unemployed Americans, and now that I've signed this bill, an additional 700,000 Americans who are still searching for work will be able to sign up for an extension of those benefits immediately.

Although the extension will help over 1 million Americans, it won't just put money into the people's pockets who are receiving the benefits. Economists tell us that when these benefits are spent on food or clothing or rent, it actually strengthens our economy and creates new jobs.

Now, this bill will also cut taxes for struggling businesses, with even larger cuts for small businesses, which means that thousands of entrepreneurs will get the cash they need to avoid laying off workers or closing their doors, and will extend the tax credit for all home buyers through April of next year while strengthening it with stronger antifraud measures.

The rebound in the housing market was one of the big factors that contributed to the growth of the economy last quarter and brought hundreds of thousands of families into the housing market. We want to give even more families the chance to own their own home.

Now, it's important to note that the bill I signed will not add to our deficit. It is fully paid for, and so it is fiscally responsible. It builds on a Recovery Act that's already saved or created over 100—over 1 million jobs, and it will lead to even more in the weeks and months ahead.

We will also build on the measure I signed today with further steps to grow our economy in the future. To that end, my economic team is looking at ideas such as additional investments in our aging roads and bridges, incentives to encourage families and businesses to make buildings more energy efficient, additional tax cuts for businesses to create jobs, additional steps to increase the flow of credit to small businesses, and an aggressive agenda to promote exports and help American manufacturers sell their products around the world.

So although it will take time and it will take patience, I am confident that our economy will recover. I'm confident that we're moving in the right direction. And I promise that I won't rest until America prospers once again.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:33 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Army psychiatrist Maj. Nidal M. Hasan, suspected gunman in the November 5 shootings at Fort Hood, TX. H.R. 3548, approved November 6, was assigned Public Law No. 111–95. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Message to the Congress on the Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Weapons of Mass Destruction
November 6, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice,

stating that the national emergency with respect to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction that was declared in Executive Order 12938, as amended, is to continue in effect for 1 year beyond November 14, 2009.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
November 6, 2009.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 7. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Weekly Address
November 7, 2009

I'd like to speak with you for a few minutes today about the tragedy that took place at Fort Hood. This past Thursday, on a clear Texas afternoon, an Army psychiatrist walked into the Soldier Readiness Processing Center and began shooting his fellow soldiers.

It is an act of violence that would have been heartbreaking had it occurred anyplace in America. It's a crime that would have horrified us had its victims been Americans of any background. But it's all the more heartbreaking and all the more despicable because of the place where it occurred and the patriots who were its victims.

The SRP is where our men and women in uniform go before getting deployed. It's where they get their teeth checked and their medical records updated and make sure everything is in order before getting shipped out. It was in this place, on a base where our soldiers ought to feel most safe, where those brave Americans who are preparing to risk their lives in defense of our Nation lost their lives in a crime against our Nation. Soldiers stationed in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the world called and emailed loved ones at Fort Hood, all expressing the same stunned reaction: I'm supposed to be the one in harm's way, not you.

Thursday's shooting was one of the most devastating ever committed on an American military base. And yet even as we saw the worst of human nature on full display, we also saw the best of America. We saw soldiers and civilians alike rushing to the aid of fallen comrades, tearing off bullet-riddled clothes to treat the injured, using blouses as tourniquets, taking down the shooter even as they bore wounds themselves.

We saw soldiers bringing to bear on our own soil the skills they had been trained to use abroad, skills that had been honed through years of determined effort for one purpose and one purpose only: to protect and defend the United States of America. We saw the valor, selflessness, and unity of purpose that makes our service men and women the finest fighting force on Earth, that make the United States military the best the world has ever known, and that make all of us proud to be Americans.

On Friday, I met with FBI Director Mueller, Defense Secretary Gates, and representatives of the relevant agencies to discuss their ongoing investigation into what led to this terrible crime, and I'll continue to be in close contact with them as new information comes in.

We can't fully know what leads a man to do such a thing. But what we do know is that our thoughts are with every single one of the men and women who were injured at Fort Hood. Our thoughts are with all the families who've lost a loved one in this national tragedy. And our thoughts are with all the Americans who wear or have worn the proud uniform of the United States of America: our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coast guardsmen, and the military families who love and support them.

In tribute to those who fell at Fort Hood, I've ordered flags flying over the White House and other Federal buildings to be lowered to halfstaff from now until Veterans Day next Wednesday. Veterans Day is our chance to honor those Americans who've served on the battlefields, from Lexington to Antietam,

Normandy to Manila, Inchon to Khe Sanh, Ramadi to Kandahar.

They are Americans of every race, faith, and station. They are Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus and nonbelievers. They are descendents of immigrants and immigrants themselves. They reflect the diversity that makes this America, but what they share is a patriotism like no other. What they share is a commitment to country that has been tested and proved worthy. What they share is the same unflinching courage, unblinking compassion, and uncommon camaraderie that soldiers and civilians of Fort Hood showed America and showed the world.

These are the men and women we honor today. These are the men and women we honor on Veterans Day. And these are the men and women we shall honor every day, in times of war and times of peace, so long as our Nation endures.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:15 p.m. on November 6 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on November 7. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 6, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on November 7. In the address, the President referred to Army psychiatrist Maj. Nidal M. Hasan, suspected gunman in the November 5 shootings at Foot Hood, TX. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on House of Representatives Action on Health Care Reform Legislation

November 7, 2009

Good afternoon, everybody. I just want to say a few words about the landmark vote that the House of Representatives is poised to take today, a vote that can bring us one step closer to making real the promise of quality, affordable health care for the American people.

For the better part of a year now, Members of the House and the Senate have been working diligently and constructively to craft legislation that will benefit millions of American families and millions of American businesses who urgently need it. For the first time ever, they've passed bills through every single committee responsible for reform. They've brought us closer than we have ever been to passing health insurance reform on behalf of the American people.

Now is the time to finish the job. The bill that the House has produced will provide stability and security for Americans who have insurance, quality, affordable options for those who don't, and lower costs for American families and American businesses. And as I've insisted from the beginning, it is a bill that is fully paid for and will actually reduce our long-term Federal deficit.

This bill is change that the American people urgently need. Don't just take my word for it. Consider the national groups who've come out in support of this bill on behalf of their members. The Consumers Union supports it because it will create, and I quote, "a more secure, affordable health care system for the American people."

The American Medical Association and the American Nurses Association support it on behalf of doctors and nurses and medical professionals who know firsthand what's broken in our current system and who see what happens when their patients can't get the care they need because of insurance industry bureaucracies.

The National Farmers Union supports this bill because it will control costs for farmers and ranchers and address the unique challenges rural Americans face when it comes to receiving quality care.

And the AARP supports it because it will achieve the goal for which the AARP has been fighting for decades: reducing the cost of health care, expanding coverage for America's seniors, and strengthening Medicare for the long haul.

Now, no bill can ever contain everything that everybody wants, or please every constituency and every district. That's an impossible task. But what is possible, what's in our grasp right

now is the chance to prevent a future where every day 14,000 Americans continue to lose their health insurance and every year 18,000 Americans die because they don't have it; a future where crushing costs keep small businesses from succeeding and big businesses from competing in the global economy; a future where countless dreams are deferred or scaled back because of a broken system we could have fixed when we had the chance.

What we can do right now is choose a better future and pass a bill that brings us to the very cusp of building what so many generations of Americans have sought to build: a better health care system for this country.

Millions of Americans are watching right now. Their families and their businesses are counting on us. After all, this is why they sent us here, to finally confront the challenges that Washington had been putting off for decades, to make their lives better, to leave this country stronger than we found it.

I just came from the Hill, where I talked to the Members of Congress there, and I reminded them that opportunities like this come around maybe once in a generation. Most public servants pass through their entire careers without the chance to make as important a difference in the lives of their constituents and the life of this country. This is their moment, this is our moment, to live up to the trust that the American people have placed in us—even when it's hard, especially when it's hard. This is our moment to deliver.

I urge Members of Congress to rise to this moment, answer the call of history, and vote yes for health insurance reform for America.

Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:20 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Health Care Reform Legislation

November 7, 2009

Tonight, in an historic vote, the House of Representatives passed a bill that would finally make real the promise of quality, affordable health care for the American people.

The Affordable Health Care for America Act is a piece of legislation that will provide stability and security for Americans who have insurance, quality affordable options for those who don't, and bring down the cost of health care for families, businesses, and the Government while strengthening the financial health of Medicare. And it is legislation that is fully paid for and will reduce our long-term Federal deficit.

Thanks to the hard work of the House, we are just two steps away from achieving health insurance reform in America. Now the United States Senate must follow suit and pass its version of the legislation. I am absolutely confident it will, and I look forward to signing comprehensive health insurance reform into law by the end of the year.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

Remarks on House of Representatives Passage of Health Care Reform Legislation

November 8, 2009

Good afternoon, everybody. I just want to say a few words about two milestones that have passed in the last few hours that represent encouraging progress for our country.

The first was the historic vote the House took last night on health insurance reform. For years we've been told that this couldn't be done. After all, neither Chamber of Congress has been able to pass a comprehensive health insurance reform bill for generations, but last night the House proved differently.

The Affordable Health Care for America Act is a piece of legislation that will provide stability and security for Americans who have insurance, quality, affordable options for those who don't, and bring down the cost of health care for families, businesses, and our Government, while strengthening the financial health of Medicare. It is legislation that is fully paid for, and it will reduce our long-term Federal deficit.

Given the heated and often misleading rhetoric surrounding this legislation, I know that this was a courageous vote for many Members of Congress, and I'm grateful to them and for the rest of their colleagues for taking us this far. But more importantly, so are the millions of Americans whose lives will change when we achieve insurance reform: families with preexisting conditions who will finally have insurance coverage; parents who will be protected from annual and lifetime limits that can force them to pay exorbitant out-of-pocket costs for a child's illness; small businesses that will finally be able to cover their employees; and working folks who will finally be able to afford health insurance for the very first time.

Americans like Katie Gibson, a cancer survivor from Bozeman, Montana, who shared her story with me this summer. Because of a medical condition, Katie's insurance policy was suddenly revoked when she needed it most, even though she was paying her premiums. I called Katie this morning, and I told her that when the bill that passed last night becomes law, we'll be able to protect Americans just like her from the kinds of insurance company abuses she had to endure. And I told her that it was because of her willingness to share her story and the extraordinary activism that she and people like her all across the country displayed—not just this year, but over the last several years—that we are finally this close to getting reform done.

Their lives are what's at stake in this debate, and moments like this are why they sent us here, to finally meet the challenges that Washington has put off for decades, to make their lives better and this Nation stronger, to move America forward. That's what the House did last night when it brought us closer than we have ever been to comprehensive health insurance reform in America.

Now it falls on the United States Senate to take the baton and bring this effort to the finish line on behalf of the American people. And I'm absolutely confident that they will. And I'm equally convinced that on the day that we gather here at the White House and I sign comprehensive health insurance reform legislation into law, they'll be able to join their House colleagues and say that this was their finest moment in public service, the moment we delivered change we promised to the American people and did something to leave this country stronger than we found it.

Passage of Election Legislation by the Iraqi Parliament

The second development I want to mention is a significant breakthrough in Iraq, where Iraq's parliament has approved a new election law that paves the way for national elections early next year. This is an important milestone as the Iraqi people continue to take responsibility for their future.

I want to congratulate Iraq's leaders for reaching this agreement. Their flexibility and commitment to their country sends an important signal to the world about Iraq's democracy and national unity. And I look forward to prompt approval of this law by Iraq's Presidency Council.

Iraq has known many challenges, and in the past several weeks, we've seen that there are still those who would kill innocent men, women, and children to deny the Iraqi people the future they deserve. Today's step forward is another reminder that these enemies of the Iraqi people will fail.

The United States will continue to stand with Iraq as a strong partner and as a friend. Tough challenges remain, and I'm sure that there will be difficult days to come. But this agreement advances the political progress that can bring lasting peace and unity to Iraq and allow for the

orderly and responsible transition of American combat troops out of Iraq by next September.

So I want to congratulate our troops and civilians who are serving so capably in Iraq, and I want to congratulate the Iraqi people who have taken an important step forward in pursuit of a better future.

There's much more work to be done, but with today's news, we're continuing to move in the right direction as we continue to look forward to Iraqi elections early next year.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at a Memorial Service at Fort Hood, Texas
November 10, 2009

To the Fort Hood community; to Admiral Mullen, General Casey, General Cone, Secretary McHugh, Secretary Gates; most importantly, to family, friends, and members of our Armed Forces: We come together filled with sorrow for the 13 Americans that we have lost, with gratitude for the lives that they led, and with a determination to honor them through the work we carry on.

This is a time of war, yet these Americans did not die on a foreign field of battle. They were killed here, on American soil, in the heart of this great State and the heart of this great American community. This is the fact that makes the tragedy even more painful, even more incomprehensible.

For those families who have lost a loved one, no words can fill the void that's been left. We knew these men and women as soldiers and caregivers. You knew them as mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, sisters and brothers.

But here is what you must also know: Your loved ones endure through the life of our Nation. Their memory will be honored in the places they lived and by the people they touched. Their life's work is our security and the freedom that we all too often take for granted. Every evening that the sun sets on a tranquil town; every dawn that a flag is unfurled; every moment that an American enjoys life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—that is their legacy. Neither this country, nor the values upon which we were founded, could exist without men and women like these 13 Americans. And that is why we must pay tribute to their stories.

Chief Warrant Officer Michael Cahill had served in the National Guard and worked as a physician's assistant for decades. A husband and father of three, he was so committed to his patients that on the day he died, he was back at work just weeks after having had a heart attack.

Major Libardo Eduardo Caraveo spoke little English when he came to America as a teenager. But he put himself through college, earned a Ph.D., and was helping combat units cope with the stress of deployment. He's survived by his wife, sons, and step-daughters.

Staff Sergeant Justin DeCrow joined the Army right after high school, married his high school sweetheart, and had served as a light wheeled mechanic and satellite communications operator. He was known as an optimist, a mentor, and a loving husband and father.

After retiring from the Army as a major, John Gaffaney cared for society's most vulnerable during two decades as a psychiatric nurse. He spent 3 years trying to return to active duty in this time of war, and he was preparing to deploy to Iraq as a captain. He leaves behind a wife and son.

Specialist Frederick Greene was a Tennessean who wanted to join the Army for a long time, and did so in 2008, with the support of his family. As a combat engineer, he was a natural leader, and he is survived by his wife and two daughters.

Specialist Jason Hunt was also recently married, with three children to care for. He joined the Army after high school and did a tour in Iraq. And it was there that he reenlisted for six

more years on his 21st birthday so that he could continue to serve.

Staff Sergeant Amy Krueger was an athlete in high school and joined the Army shortly after 9/11 and had since returned home to speak to students about her experience. When her mother told her she couldn't take on Usama bin Laden by herself, Amy replied, "Watch me."

Private First Class Aaron Nemelka was an Eagle Scout who just recently signed up to do one of the most dangerous jobs in the service, diffuse bombs, so that he could help save lives. He was proudly carrying on a tradition of military service that runs deep within his family.

Private First Class Michael Pearson loved his family and loved his music, and his goal was to be a music teacher. He excelled at playing the guitar and could create songs on the spot and show others how to play. He joined the military a year ago and was preparing for his first deployment.

Captain Russell Seager worked as a nurse for the VA, helping veterans with posttraumatic stress. He had extraordinary respect for the military and signed up to serve so that he could help soldiers cope with the stress of combat and return to civilian life. He leaves behind a wife and son.

Private Francheska Velez, daughter of a father from Colombia and a Puerto Rican mother, had recently served in Korea and in Iraq and was pursuing a career in the Army. When she was killed, she was pregnant with her first child and was excited about becoming a mother.

Lieutenant Colonel Juanita Warman was the daughter and granddaughter of Army veterans. She was a single mom who put herself through college and graduate school and served as a nurse practitioner while raising her two daughters. She also left behind a loving husband.

Private First Class Kham Xiong came to America from Thailand as a small child. He was a husband and father who followed his brother into the military because his family had a strong history of service. He was preparing for his first deployment to Afghanistan.

These men and women came from all parts of the country. Some had long careers in the military. Some had signed up to serve in the shadow of 9/11. Some had known intense combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, and some cared for those who did. Their lives speak to the strength, the dignity, the decency of those who serve, and that's how they will be remembered.

For that same spirit is embodied in the community here at Fort Hood and in the many wounded who are still recovering. As was already mentioned, in those terrible minutes during the attack, soldiers made makeshift tourniquets out of their clothes. They braved gunfire to reach the wounded and ferried them back to safety in the backs of cars and a pickup truck.

One young soldier, Amber Bahr, was so intent on helping others, she did not realize for some time that she herself had been shot in the back. Two police officers, Mark Todd and Kim Munley, saved countless lives by risking their own. One medic, Francisco de la Serna, treated both Officer Munley and the gunman who shot her.

It may be hard to comprehend the twisted logic that led to this tragedy. But this much we do know: No faith justifies these murderous and craven acts; no just and loving God looks upon them with favor. For what he has done, we know that the killer will be met with justice in this world and the next.

These are trying times for our country. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, the same extremists who killed nearly 3,000 Americans continue to endanger America, our allies, and innocent Afghans and Pakistanis. In Iraq, we're working to bring a war to a successful end, as there are still those who would deny the Iraqi people the future that Americans and Iraqis have sacrificed so much for.

As we face these challenges, the stories of those at Fort Hood reaffirm the core values that we are fighting for and the strength that we must draw upon. Theirs are the tales of American men and women answering an extraordinary call, the call to serve their comrades, their communities, and their country. In an age of selfishness, they embody responsibility. In an era of division, they call upon us to come together. In a time of cynicism, they remind us of who we are as Americans.

We are a nation that endures because of the courage of those who defend it. We saw that valor in those who braved bullets here at Fort

Hood, just as surely as we see it in those who signed up knowing they would serve in harm's way.

We are a nation of laws whose commitment to justice is so enduring that we would treat a gunman and give him due process, just as surely as we will see that he pays for his crimes.

We're a nation that guarantees the freedom to worship as one chooses. And instead of claiming God for our side, we remember Lincoln's words, and always pray to be on the side of God.

We're a nation that is dedicated to the proposition that all men and women are created equal. We live that truth within our military and see it in the varied backgrounds of those we lay to rest today. We defend that truth at home and abroad, and we know that Americans will always be found on the side of liberty and equality. That's who we are as a people.

Tomorrow is Veterans Day. It's a chance to pause and to pay tribute: for students to learn the struggles that preceded them; for families to honor the service of parents and grandparents; for citizens to reflect upon the sacrifices that have been made in pursuit of a more perfect union.

For history is filled with heroes. You may remember the stories of a grandfather who marched across Europe, an uncle who fought in Vietnam, a sister who served in the gulf. But as we honor the many generations who have served, all of us—every single American—must acknowledge that this generation has more than proved itself the equal of those who've come before.

We need not look to the past for greatness, because it is before our very eyes. This generation of soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coast guardsmen have volunteered in the time of certain danger. They are part of the finest fighting force that the world has ever known. They have served tour after tour of duty in distant, different, and difficult places. They have stood watch in blinding deserts and on snowy mountains. They have extended the opportunity of self-government to peoples that have suffered tyranny and war. They are men and women, White, Black, and Brown, of all faiths and all stations, all Americans, serving together to protect our people, while giving others half a world away the chance to lead a better life.

In today's wars, there's not always a simple ceremony that signals our troops' success, no surrender papers to be signed or capital to be claimed. But the measure of the impact of these young men and women is no less great. In a world of threats that know no borders, their legacy will be marked in the safety of our cities and towns and the security and opportunity that's extended abroad. It will serve as testimony to the character of those who served and the example that all of you in uniform set for America and for the world.

Here at Fort Hood, we pay tribute to 13 men and women who were not able to escape the horror of war, even in the comfort of home. And later today, at Fort Lewis, one community will gather to remember so many in one Stryker Brigade who have fallen in Afghanistan.

Long after they are laid to rest—when the fighting has finished, and our Nation has endured; when today's service men and women are veterans, and their children have grown—it will be said that this generation believed under the most trying of tests; believed in perseverance, not just when it was easy, but when it was hard; that they paid the price and bore the burden to secure this Nation, and stood up for the values that live in the hearts of all free peoples.

So we say goodbye to those who now belong to eternity. We press ahead in pursuit of the peace that guided their service. May God bless the memory of those that we have lost. And may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:55 p.m. at III Corps Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Robert W. Cone, USA, commanding general, III Corps and Fort Hood; Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al

Qaida terrorist organization; and Army psychiatrist Maj. Nidal M. Hasan, suspected gunman in the November 5 shootings at Foot Hood, TX.

The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at a Veterans Day Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia
November 11, 2009

Thank you. Please be seated. Thank you, Secretary Shinseki, for the generous introduction, more importantly, the extraordinary bravery in service to our country, both on and off the battlefield. I want to thank our outstanding Vice President, Joe Biden, and his wonderful wife, Dr. Jill Biden, for being here today. We want to thank the Bidens for their son, Beau's, service as well; we're glad he just got back from Iraq.

We want to say a special word of thanks to Brigadier General Karl Horst, who's the commander of the Military District of Washington, for being here, and for your lifetime of distinguished service to our Nation. To Gene Crayton, president of the Paralyzed Veterans of America, thank you for being here, and to all the veterans service organizations for the extraordinary work, day in, day out on behalf of our Nation's heroes.

To the members of our Armed Forces and the veterans who are here today, I am deeply honored and humbled to spend Veterans Day with you in this sacred place where generations of heroes have come to rest and generations of Americans have come to show their gratitude.

There are many honors and responsibilities that come with this job, but none is more profound than serving as Commander in Chief. Yesterday I visited the troops at Fort Hood. We gathered in remembrance of those we recently lost. We paid tribute to the lives they led. There was something that I saw in them, something that I see in the eyes of every soldier and sailor, airman, marine, and coast guardsman that I have had the privilege to meet in this country and around the world, and that thing is determination.

In this time of war, we gather here mindful that the generation serving today already deserves a place alongside previous generations for the courage they have shown and the sacrifices that they have made. In an era where so many acted only in pursuit of narrow self-interest, they've chosen the opposite. They chose to serve the cause that is greater than self, many even after they knew they'd be sent into harm's way. And for the better part of a decade, they have endured tour after tour in distant and difficult places, they have protected us from danger, and they have given others the opportunity for a better life.

So to all of them—to our veterans, to the fallen, and to their families—there is no tribute, no commemoration, no praise that can truly match the magnitude of your service and your sacrifice.

This is a place where it is impossible not to be moved by that sacrifice. But even as we gather here this morning, people are gathering all across America, not only to express thanks of a grateful nation, but to tell stories that demand to be told. They're stories of wars whose names have come to define eras, battles that echo throughout history. They're stories of patriots who sacrificed in pursuit of a more perfect union: of a grandfather who marched across Europe, of a friend who fought in Vietnam, of a sister who served in Iraq. They're the stories of generations of Americans who left home barely more than boys and girls, became men and women, and returned home heroes.

And when these Americans who had dedicated their lives to defending this country came home, many settled on a life of service, choosing to make their entire lives a tour of duty. Many chose to live a quiet life, trading one uniform and set of responsibilities for another: doctor, engineer, teacher, mom, dad. They bought homes, raised families, built businesses. They built the greatest middle class that the world has ever known. Some put away their medals, stayed humble about their service, and moved on. Some, carrying shrapnel and scars, found that they couldn't.

We call this a holiday. But for many veterans, it's another day of memories that drive them to live their lives each day as best as they possibly can. For our troops, it is another day in harm's way. For their families, it is another day to feel the absence of a loved one and the concern for their safety. For our wounded warriors, it is another day of slow and arduous recovery. And in this national cemetery, it is another day when grief remains fresh. So while it is important and proper that we mark this day, it is far more important we spend all our days determined to keep the promises that we've made to all who answer this country's call.

Carved into the marble behind me are the words of our first Commander in Chief: "When we assumed the soldier, we did not lay aside the citizen." Just as the contributions that our service men and women make to this Nation don't end when they take off their uniform, neither do our obligations to them. And when we fulfill those obligations, we aren't just keeping faith with our veterans; we are keeping faith with the ideals of service and sacrifice upon which this Republic was founded.

If we're honest with ourselves, we'll admit that there have been times where we as a nation have betrayed that sacred trust. Our Vietnam veterans served with great honor. They often came home greeted not with gratitude or support, but with condemnation and neglect. That's something that will never happen again. To them and to all who have served, in every battle, in every war, we say that it's never too late to say thank you. We honor your service; we are forever grateful. And just as you have not forgotten your missing comrades, neither, ever, will we. Our service men and women have been doing right by America for generations. And as long as I am Commander in Chief, America's going to do right by them.

That is my message to all veterans today. That is my message to all who serve in harm's way. To the husbands and wives back home doing the parenting of two, to the parents who watch their sons and daughters go off to war and the children who wonder when mom and dad is coming home, to all our wounded warriors, and to the families who laid a loved one to rest, America will not let you down. We will take care of our own.

And to those who are serving in far-flung places today, when your tour ends, when you see our flag, when you touch our soil, you will be home in an America that is forever here for you just as you've been there for us. That is my promise—our Nation's promise—to you.

Ninety-one years ago today, the battlefields of Europe fell quiet as World War I came to a close. But we don't mark this day each year as a celebration of victory, as proud of that victory as we are. We mark this day as a celebration of those who made victory possible. It's a day we keep in our minds the brave men and women of this young Nation—generations of them—who above all else believed in and fought for a set of ideals. Because they did, our country still stands, our founding principles still shine, nations around the world that once knew nothing but fear now know the blessings of freedom.

That is why we fight—in hopes of a day when we no longer need to. And that is why we gather at these solemn remembrances and reminders of war—to recommit ourselves to the hard work of peace.

There will be a day before long when this generation of service men and women step out of uniform. They will build families and lives of their own. God willing, they will grow old. And someday, their children and their children's children will gather here to honor them.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:33 a.m. in the Amphitheatre at Arlington National Cemetery. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Signing the Military Spouses Residency Relief Act
November 11, 2009

Today I have signed into law S. 475, the "Military Spouses Residency Relief Act". This Act, among other things, would provide that when a service member leaves his or her home State in accord with military or naval orders, the service member's spouse may retain residency in his or her home State for voting and tax purposes, after relocating from that State to accompany the service member.

When the military orders service members to move, spouses who move with them often have to pay taxes in a new State or locality and lose the right to vote in the place considered to be home. This legislation will alleviate these and other burdens on our military families. As the Congress has recognized, and as the legislative history reflects, this legislation is an important means of maintaining the morale and readiness of our Armed Forces and significantly enhances the ability of our military to effectively recruit and retain these highly valued service personnel.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
November 11, 2009.

NOTE: S. 475, approved November 11, was assigned Public Law No. 111–97.

Memorandum on Inventory of Files Related to Fort Hood Shooting
November 10, 2009

Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, the Director of National Intelligence, and the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation

Subject: Inventory of Files Related to Fort Hood Shooting

On November 6, 2009, I directed that an immediate inventory be conducted of all intelligence in U.S. Government files that existed prior to November 6, 2009, relevant to the tragic shooting at Fort Hood, Texas, especially anything having to do with the alleged shooter, Major Nidal Malik Hasan, U.S. Army. In addition, I directed an immediate review be initiated to determine how any such intelligence was handled, shared, and acted upon within individual departments and agencies and what intelligence was shared with others. This inventory and review shall be conducted in a manner that does not interfere with the ongoing criminal investigations of the Fort Hood shooting.

The results of this inventory and review, as well as any recommendations for improvements to procedures and practices, shall be provided to John Brennan, Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, who will serve as the principal point of contact on this matter for the White House. Preliminary results of this review shall be provided by November 30, 2009.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 12.

Remarks on the National Economy
November 12, 2009

Good morning, everybody. Before departing for Asia this morning, I'd like to make a brief statement about the economy. Over the past 10 months, we've taken a number of bold steps to break the back of this recession. We've worked to stabilize the financial system, revive lending to small businesses and families, and prevent responsible homeowners from losing their homes. And through the Recovery Act, we've cut taxes for middle class families, extended and

increased unemployment insurance, and created and saved more than a million jobs.

As a result, the economy is now growing again for the first time in more than a year and faster than at any time in the past 2 years. But even though we've slowed the loss of jobs—and today's report on the continued decline in unemployment claims is a hopeful sign—the economic growth that we've seen has not yet led to the job growth that we desperately need. As I've said from the start of this crisis, hiring often takes time to catch up to economic growth. And given the magnitude of the economic turmoil that we've experienced, employers are reluctant to hire.

Small businesses and large firms are demanding more of their employees, their increasing their hours and adding temporary workers, but these companies have not yet been willing to take the steps necessary to hire again. Meanwhile, millions of Americans, our friends, our neighbors, our family members, are desperately searching for jobs. This is one of the great challenges that remains in our economy, a challenge that my administration is absolutely determined to meet.

We all know that there are limits to what Government can and should do, even during such difficult times. But we have an obligation to consider every additional responsible step that we can [take]* to encourage and accelerate job creation in this country. And that's why in December we'll be holding a forum at the White House on jobs and economic growth. We'll gather CEOs and small-business owners, economists and financial experts, as well as representatives from labor unions and nonprofit groups, to talk about how we can work together to create jobs and get this economy moving again.

It's important that we don't make any ill-considered decisions, even with the best intentions, particularly at a time when our resources are so limited. But it's just as important that we are open to any demonstrably good idea to supplement the steps we've already taken to put America back to work. That's what this forum is about.

In the coming days, I'll also be meeting with leaders abroad to discuss a strategy for growth that is both balanced and broadly shared. It's a strategy in which Asian and Pacific markets are open to our exports and one in which prosperity around the world is no longer as dependent on American consumption and borrowing, but rather more on American innovation and products.

It's through these steps with our partners, in addition to the work we're doing here at home, that we will not only revive our economy in the short term, but rebuild it stronger in the long term. That's been the focus of our efforts these past 10 months; it will continue to be our focus in the months ahead.

Thanks very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:34 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks to Military Personnel and Their Families at Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage, Alaska
November 12, 2009

The President. Hello, Elmendorf. Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Please—thank you so much. Anybody who has a seat, go ahead and take a seat. [*Laughter*] I want to thank General Troy for the introduction and for his extraordinary service; to Colonel Mark Camerer and your outstanding local leaders for welcoming me here today. And I want to give a shout-out to the United States Air Force Band of the Pacific.

I realize that your commander, General Atkins, couldn't be here. I'm told that he got

* White House correction.

called down to Hawaii. [*Laughter*] Now, that's a tough assignment. I know a little something about Hawaii—*shaka brah*, what's up? [*Laughter*] I grew up there, so I hope that he's getting as warm a welcome as I'm getting here.

I want to thank your senior enlisted leaders: Command Chief Master Sergeant Robert Moore, Chief Master Sergeant Tom Baker, and Command Sergeant Major David Turnbull. Give them a big round of applause. And please give some applause to all the airmen and soldiers up here. They look terrific.

It is wonderful to be here at one of America's great air bases. I have to tell you I'm also really excited because I had up until today visited 49 States, so this is officially my 50th State.

Audience member. We love you, Obama!

The President. I love you back. We also have a lot of folks from Fort Richardson. We've got folks from all across Alaskan Command—Air Force, Army, Navy, Coast Guard, United States Marines; Active, Guard, and Reserve. We have our allies and friends from the Canadian Armed Forces.

I see many spouses here today. And I want you to know you are the backbone of our military families, and we honor your service. And I'm thrilled to see the kids who are here today. Hey, guys, thank you. I know you're proud of your mom and dads, but we're all proud of you too.

You know, we're here in "America's Last Frontier." And most of you are far from home. And I know your service is made a little easier by your unbelievable neighbors. So we want to thank your local and State leaders, Lieutenant Governor Craig Campbell, all the people of Anchorage and Alaska for their incredible support.

And we're also joined today by a leader who is fighting for Alaska in Washington and for you and all our men and women in uniform as members of the Armed Services Committee and the Veterans Affairs Committee—Mark Begich is here; Senator Mark Begich is in the house. Stand up, Mark, so everybody can see you.

Now, today I'm on my way to Asia; my first visit there as President. The crews are out there refueling Air Force One. But I didn't want to just pass through, because this is also, as I said, my first visit to Alaska and my first visit to Elmendorf. And I couldn't come here without taking this opportunity to deliver a simple message, a message of thanks to you and your families.

Now, these have been days of tribute. Two days ago, we gathered at Fort Hood, and we honored 13 Americans taken from us: soldiers and caregivers, mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. We grieved with families who have endured unimaginable loss. And we found inspiration in the wounded, their spirits unbowed, and in those who braved the bullets so that others might live.

Yesterday we gathered at Arlington National Cemetery to salute proud veterans who served on foreign fields long ago and wounded warriors from today. And as citizens of a grateful nation, we are humbled by such service.

Today we gather here at Elmendorf, and we see the same spirit. It's the same spirit that I saw in the outstanding airmen and soldiers I met with a few moments ago. It's the spirit that I see in all of you. It's your sense of service, answering your country's call, volunteering in a time of war knowing that you could be sent into harm's way. That's a sense of responsibility on your part, the belief that the blessings we cherish as Americans are not gifts that we take for granted, they are freedoms that are earned. And it's your sense of unity, coming from every corner of the country, from every color and every creed and every faith and every station, to take care of each other and to serve together and to succeed together, as Americans.

So I'm here to say to all of you, all of you who serve, all the families who are here: Of all the privileges I have as President, I have no greater honor than serving as your Commander in Chief. We have the finest fighting force the world has ever known. And it's because of you, because we've got the finest personnel in the world. That's our most precious resource.

And by being here, all of you are joining a long line of service at Elmendorf, from the liberation of Pacific islands during World War II through a long cold war. You embody that creed: "Faithful to a proud heritage, a tradition

of honor, and a legacy of valor." And you uphold that legacy every day.

Twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year, you keep America's skies safe. So we salute the 3d Wing and the 11th Air Force. You project power across the Pacific, returning just recently from Guam—the 90th Fighter Squadron, the Dicemen, and the 525th Fighter Squadron, the Bulldogs, and all the maintenance troops who support them. Welcome home. And when disaster strikes, whether a typhoon in the Philippines or an earthquake in Samoa, you're there, delivering the relief that saved—saves lives. So thank you Firebirds.

Today we also send our thoughts and prayers to all those who at this very moment are serving on the frontlines. They are airmen from Elmendorf in every corner of the world. They're soldiers from Fort Richardson: military police in Iraq; the 4th Brigade Combat Team in Afghanistan.

The Fort Rich paratroopers are no strangers to tough assignments. A few years back, you all spent 14 months in Iraq. Now they're working to bring stability and security to eastern Afghanistan, building roads and medical clinics, renovating schools, protecting the Afghan people, giving them a chance at a better future. And they are doing a terrific job, and we salute them.

But with services comes sacrifice. All of you know this. You've made the most profound commitment a person can make: You've pledged to dedicate your life to your country, and perhaps give your life for it. Here at Elmendorf and Fort Richardson, some have.

They're airmen like Staff Sergeant Timothy Bowles, who, when a comrade fell sick, volunteered to take his place on the patrol in Afghanistan that would end up taking his life. They're soldiers from the 4th Brigade Combat Team, like the husband and father who gave his life in Afghanistan last week, Specialist Julian Berisford.

And citizens of this State, like Alaska Native Corporal Gregory Fleury. Raised in Anchorage, he joined the Marines and served two tours in Iraq. He loved the Corps. He loved Alaska, so much so that he carried the State flag with him everywhere. It was with him last month when he was killed in those helicopter crashes in Afghanistan.

A little while ago, I had the honor of meeting Greg's family, Donna and Christopher, and his grandfather Albert. And I expressed the gratitude of our Nation, and we thank them for being with us here today. Donna, Albert, please stand.

There are no words that are strong enough and no tribute worthy enough to match the magnitude of such service. But to you and all who serve, I say this: The American people thank you. We honor you. And just as you have fulfilled your responsibilities to your Nation, your Nation will fulfill its responsibilities to you.

So as your Commander in Chief, here's the commitment I make to you: We'll make sure you can meet the missions we ask of you. And that's why we're increasing the defense budget, including spending on the Air Force and the Army. We'll make sure we have the right force structure. So we've halted reductions in the Air Force, increased the size of the Army ahead of schedule, and also approved a temporary increase in the Army.

We'll spend our defense dollars wisely. So we're cutting tens of billions of dollars in waste and projects that even the Pentagon says it doesn't need, money that's better spent on taking care of you and your families and building the 21st-century military that we do need.

I want you guys to understand I will never hesitate to use force to protect the American people or our vital interests. But I also make you this promise: I will not risk your lives unless it is necessary to America's vital interests. And if it is necessary, the United States of America will have your back. We will give you the strategy and the clear mission you deserve. We will give you the equipment and support that you need to get the job done. And that includes public support back home. That is a promise that I make to you.

And as you meet your missions around the world, we will take care of your families here at home. And that's why the First Lady, Michelle, has been visiting bases across the country. Go Michelle. [*Laughter*] Your family is a priority for our family. So we're increasing pay;

we're increasing childcare; we're increasing support to help spouses and families deal with the stress and separation of war.

And finally, we pledge to be there when you come home. We're improving care for our wounded warriors, especially those with PTSD and traumatic brain injuries. I want to salute the outstanding work you do at the hospital here on the base, including your new TBI clinic. Thank you for giving our wounded warriors the world-class care they deserve.

We're funding the post-9/11 GI bill because we want to give your families the chance to pursue your dreams. And we're making the biggest commitment to our veterans, the largest percentage increase in the VA budget in more than 30 years.

So these are the commitments I'm making to you. Because you've always taken care of America, and America has to take care of you back. America's obligation to our military, as we saw this week, is a sacred trust that we are honor-bound to uphold.

It's the sacred trust that brought a nation together this week around 13 battlefield crosses. It's the sacred trust that leads us to pause, on that November day, to give thanks for all those who served before us. It's the sacred trust that brings me here to say thank you for serving today, thank you to you and your families for all you do to protect this country we love.

God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:39 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. William J. Troy, USA, commander, U.S. Army Alaska; Col. Mark D. Camerer, USAF, vice commander, and Chief Master Sgt. Tom Baker, USAF, 3d Wing, Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska; Lt. Gen. Dana T. Atkins, USAF, commander, Alaskan Command; Command Chief Master Sgt. Robert Moore, USAF, 11th Air Force; Command Sgt. Maj. David Turnbull, USA, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry; and Donna Fleury-Brown, mother, Christopher Flygare, father, and Albert Fleury, grandfather, of Cpl. Gregory M.W. Fleury, USMC, who was killed in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, on Oct. 26.

Statement on a Business Roundtable Report on Health Care Reform
November 12, 2009

A new report released today by the Business Roundtable underscores what experts and businesspeople have told us all along: Comprehensive health insurance reform is one of the most important investments we can make in American competitiveness. It finds, for example, that if reform passes this year, businesses could see health care costs reduced by as much as $3,000 per employee in 2019. And that means more than savings for businesses; it will be vital boost to American competitiveness. The report also echoes widespread support for the cost containment and fiscal responsibility provisions in current legislation, such as a new CMS Innovation Center, accountable care organizations, and reducing preventable hospital readmissions.

The Roundtable's report also makes clear the steep price that American businesses stand to pay if we fail to act. If we don't pass comprehensive reform, the report finds, health care costs that are already squeezing our businesses will continue to rise, and in 10 years, employment-based spending on health care for large employers will be fully 166 percent higher per employee than it is today. And the yearly health insurance costs for the average employee will rise to a staggering $28,530.

The Business Roundtable's report comes as Congress is reaching new milestones in the effort to reform our health care system. The House of Representatives acted to pass their version of the legislation on Saturday night, and the Senate's version will move to the floor soon. The potential benefit for America's businesses is just another reason why we can't afford delay or political games as this process moves forward. I look forward to working with our business communities and their partners in

Congress to pass reform by the end of the year.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

Statement on the Ukrainian *Holodomor* Remembrance Day
November 13, 2009

Seventy six years ago, millions of innocent Ukrainians—men, women, and children—starved to death as a result of the deliberate policies of the regime of Joseph Stalin. Tomorrow we join together, Ukrainian Americans and all Americans, to commemorate these tragic events and to honor the many victims.

From 1932 to 1933, the Ukrainian people suffered horribly during what has become known as the *Holodomor*—"death by hunger"—due to the Stalin regime's seizure of crops and farms across Ukraine. Ukraine had once been a breadbasket of Europe. Ukrainians could have fed themselves and saved millions of lives had they been allowed to do so. As we remember this calamity, we pay respect to millions of victims who showed tremendous strength and courage. The Ukrainian people overcame the horror of the great famine and have gone on to build a free and democratic country.

Remembering the victims of the man-made catastrophe of *Holodomor* provides us an opportunity to reflect upon the plight of all those who have suffered the consequences of extremism and tyranny around the world. We hope that the remembrance of *Holodomor* will help prevent such tragedy in the future.

Joint Statement by the United States of America and Japan Toward a World Without Nuclear Weapons
November 13, 2009

The Government of the United States of America and the Government of Japan welcome the renewed international attention and commitment to achieve the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons and confirm their determination to realize such a world. They welcome, in this context, the recent United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Summit on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Nuclear Disarmament and UNSC Resolutions 1540 and 1887, as well as the resolution of the Government of Japan, co-sponsored by the Government of the United States, to the United Nations General Assembly entitled "Renewed determination towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons."

Recognizing the challenge to achieve total elimination of nuclear weapons, the Government of the United States and the Government of Japan plan to work actively to create conditions for achieving this objective. They express their determination to take the following practical steps on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, in a way that promotes international stability and security while ensuring that those steps do not in any way diminish the national security of Japan or the United States of America and its allies.

Nuclear Disarmament

The Government of the United States continues to seek early conclusion of a START follow-on treaty through negotiations with the Russian Federation. The Government of Japan welcomes the progress made in the negotiations and expresses its expectation for early agreement. The Government of the United States and the Government of Japan call upon states that hold nuclear weapons to respect the principles of transparency, verifiability and irreversibility in the process of nuclear disarmament. The Government of the United States is committed to reducing the role of nuclear

weapons in its national security strategy, and the Government of the United States and the Government of Japan urge other states that hold nuclear weapons to do the same.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation/Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy

The Government of the United States and the Government of Japan reaffirm the importance of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and plan to cooperate so that the 2010 NPT Review Conference succeeds in strengthening the Treaty, reaffirming its central role in the international non-proliferation regime and recommending realistic and achievable goals to strengthen each of the NPT's three pillars: nuclear non-proliferation, the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and nuclear disarmament. This includes, inter alia, measures to strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, to prevent abuse of the NPT's withdrawal provision, and to establish multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle that can be widely accepted. The Government of Japan welcomes the intention of the Government of the United States to pursue ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the Government of the United States and the Government of Japan plan to cooperate to achieve the early entry into force of the CTBT. The Government of the United States and the Government of Japan are confident that their security alliance will be enhanced by the entry into force of the CTBT and the reinvigoration of the international nonproliferation regime. They are also determined to pursue the immediate commencement of negotiations on, and early conclusion of, a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. The Government of the United States and the Government of Japan intend to work together and with other countries to explore ways to enhance a new framework for civil nuclear cooperation, including assurances of fuel supply, so that countries can access peaceful nuclear power without increasing the risks of proliferation, and agree that cradle-to-grave nuclear fuel management could be one important element of the framework.

The Government of the United States and the Government of Japan declare that it remains vital for North Korea and Iran to uphold and adhere to their respective international obligations. As demonstrated by its recent missile launches and nuclear test, North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons remains a major threat to peace and stability in Northeast Asia and the entire international community. The Government of the United States and the Government of Japan reaffirm their commitment to the irreversible and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and to the goals of the September 2005 Joint Statement. They stress that the Six Party Talks remain the most effective framework to achieve these goals and they urge North Korea to return immediately to the Six Party Talks without precondition. Both governments agree to fully implement UNSC Resolutions 1718 and 1874 and urge all UN member states to do the same.

Iran's nuclear activities, in particular the recent disclosure of Iran's construction of a new facility near Qom intended for enrichment, have reinforced the international community's concern regarding the nature of its nuclear program. The Government of the United States and the Government of Japan stress that Iran has the responsibility to restore international confidence in this regard. They will not allow the global non-proliferation regime to be endangered. They reaffirm their commitment to seek a comprehensive, long-term solution through dialogue and negotiations based on UNSC resolutions, and express their firm commitment to pursue a dual-track approach to achieve this objective.

The Government of the United States and the Government of Japan plan to cooperate to ensure that the IAEA continues to have the resources, authorities, and verification capabilities necessary to carry out its essential mandate. They plan to promote efforts to gain universal adherence to the Additional Protocol, which in their shared view should be the international standard for verification, and to encourage peaceful uses of nuclear energy that adhere to the highest standards for nuclear safeguards, security, and safety. They welcome, in this context, Ambassador Amano's election to become the Director General of the IAEA in December.

The Government of the United States and the Government of Japan intend to expand nuclear nonproliferation, safeguards, and security cooperation that may include areas such as nuclear measurement and detection technologies, nuclear forensics, human resource development, training and infrastructure assistance for countries interested in nuclear energy, and coordination of our respective Member State support programs to IAEA safeguards.

Nuclear Security

The Government of the United States and the Government of Japan pledge to cooperate for the success of the 2010 Nuclear Security Summit hosted by the Government of the United States, and to promote regional efforts to strengthen nuclear security. In this regard, the Government of Japan will host a nuclear security conference for Asian countries in Tokyo in January 2010. The Government of the United States welcomes this effort, as well as the GOJ's hosting of the next preparatory meeting for the Summit in December.

The Government of the United States and the Government of Japan intend to cooperate for the full implementation of UNSC Resolution 1540, promotion of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, expansion and extension of the G8 Global Partnership, and strengthening of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and further cooperation under the Megaports Initiative. Recognizing the continuing threat of nuclear terrorism, the two governments reaffirm their commitment to ensuring that civil nuclear materials and facilities receive the highest levels of physical protection. They also pledge their support for efforts to secure all vulnerable nuclear material around the world within four years.

NOTE: This Joint Statement referred to Yukiya Amano, Ambassador and Resident Representative from Japan, International Atomic Energy Agency. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Joint Statement by the United States of America and Japan on Climate Change Negotiations

November 13, 2009

Prime Minister Hatoyama and President Obama strongly affirmed their commitment to continuing to work together to usher in a new era in the global fight against climate change, and they recognized each other's achievements toward this shared goal.

The two leaders also reaffirmed that shifting to low-carbon growth is indispensable to the health of our planet and will play a central role in reviving the global economy. To this end, our countries aspire to reduce our own emissions by 80% by 2050 and endorse a global goal of reducing emissions by 50% by that year.

Meeting the climate change challenge requires all major economies to take ambitious concrete actions: emission reduction targets by developed countries and actions by major developing countries that will significantly reduce their emissions compared to business as usual. These actions must also be subject to a robust regime of reporting and international review. A solution also requires that critical support be provided for climate mitigation and adaptation efforts among the poor and most vulnerable. The United States and Japan will continue to cooperate closely with each other on international negotiations to this end.

It is vital that we achieve a successful outcome at COP 15. The United States and Japan are determined to engage themselves at all levels to secure this goal.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama of Japan in Tokyo, Japan

November 13, 2009

Prime Minister Hatoyama. President Obama, I would like to welcome you to Japan. I'd like to express my heartfelt welcome to you. Is it very hard—despite the tragedy of the mass shooting in your country, that you have taken time out of your busy schedule to come and join us here today. We're very thankful for you—to you. And today we have had a 90-minute, very intensive discussion. I'm very happy to have had this opportunity to hold this discussion.

Well, we've come to call each other Barack and Yukio. I think we've quite—I've grown quite accustomed to calling each other by our names. And we did cover a lot of ground today. First, for Japan's diplomacy, the U.S.-Japan alliance is the cornerstone. And this is one thing that I've stressed. But as time changes and as the international environment changes, there is a need for us to further develop and deepen the U.S.-Japan alliance to make it even more constructive and future-oriented alliance. And this was what I proposed today.

And the U.S.-Japan alliance—well, actually, it so happens that next year marks the 50th anniversary of the revision of the U.S.-Japan security treaty. And starting from today we'll be spending a year to start a new process of deliberation. And I have made this proposal, and President Obama has given his consent and support towards this idea.

Now, the U.S.-Japan alliance, looking at it from the security front, naturally we have to cooperate in proliferation deterrence, on information protection, missile defense, and the use of outer space, amongst others. We need to consider these new systems for issuing security. And this is my thinking.

But the U.S.-Japan alliance is not just focused on security—for example, disaster prevention or health, education—we had many levels—and also environmental issues as well. We need to cooperate in all these areas so as to cooperate in the Asia Pacific and others so that we can further deepen our bilateral alliance. I believe that we have reached an agreement on these points.

Now, turning our eyes to the global situation, again, there are different topics that we've covered. From our side, I've talked about Afghanistan and our support to Afghanistan. Well, to Afghanistan, we will not be taking part in the refueling, but instead, providing civil assistance, and we are planning to mainly provide civil assistance of 5 billion yen in 5 years for agriculture, building of infrastructures, schools. So this is the type of assistance we want to provide. And also to improve security, we want to support the police force in Afghanistan. Furthermore, for the former soldiers, we want to provide vocational training. These are the types of things that we want to conduct.

I have communicated this to the President, and towards this new assistance package, President Obama, in principle, has stated his gratitude, appreciation towards this assistance. And furthermore, when it comes to assistance to Afghanistan, it's important that we try to directly talk with one another as to the assistance to be provided.

Now, in the area of climate change, again, we have talked on this subject. By 2015 [2050],* I have set out this goal of an 80 percent reduction. And both Japan and U.S. have agreed on this. And we want to make COP 15 a success, and we agreed to cooperate towards this end. And including China and others, there are other issues that needs to be resolved, and therefore, we need to collaborate to address these challenges.

Now, in regards to nuclear disarmament, again, we have agreed to cooperate with one another. Now, in regards to nuclear issues and also climate change, we are going to—we have issued a joint statement. And I do believe that this is quite innovative in itself, and the fact that we can take up these issues as core issues at the summit meeting is something of vital importance.

* White House correction.

Now, on the economic front—well, the economy was not a major issue this time, but again, this might reflect the times in which we're living. And over dinner, maybe, we hope to be able to discuss the issue of the economy.

Now, in relation to nuclear issues, North Korea, Iran was also discussed from President Obama. And again, we have agreed to closely cooperate with one another. And Special Representative Bosworth will be visiting North Korea—or may be visiting North Korea shortly. But this is on the premise of the six-party talks. And I do endorse this thinking and have stated so to the President.

And in regards to Iran, again, we have to support—we would like to support the approach to Iran. On the one hand, we want to emphasize our historic relationship, but also, at the same time, I promise to strengthen our alliance vis-a-vis Iran.

And also, again, in Asia, President Obama has stated that we have some—we do have a vital role to play, especially in East Asia. I have set out the concept of East Asian community, and this is because I believe that there is this alliance as the cornerstone on which we can rely.

And in Asia, the fact that the U.S. presence increases is something that have great extension towards at various levels in Asia and East Asia and Asia on the whole. And both Japan and the United States should deepen, and as a result, in East Asia, we hope to bring about peace, stability, and economic prosperity in this region. And this is something that we have pledged.

I don't want to take up all the time myself, and therefore, I'd like to conclude. But I do think that this summit meeting was extremely meaningful. And on this note, I'd like to once again say that I am very grateful to Barack, President Obama, to take time to join us here at Japan. And also, I'm thankful that he's chosen Japan as his first leg to his visit to Asia. And as Prime Minister, representing the Japanese people, I'd like to express my gratitude. Thank you.

Moderator. And next, President Obama, please.

President Obama. Well, good evening. It is a great honor to be making my first trip to Japan as President of the United States. I have fond memories of visiting Japan in my youth. I've been looking forward to this trip for some time. I'm only sorry that Michelle and the girls could not join us. The girls have been studying Japan in school, and so they have a great interest in Japanese culture. And hopefully, I'll be able to bring them next time.

I want to thank the warm welcome that Prime Minister Hatoyama and the Japanese people have extended. I appreciate the graciousness with which you understood the delay that took place as a consequence of the tragedy at Fort Hood, Texas.

Japan is my first stop as President in Asia. I began my trip here in Tokyo because the alliance between the United States and Japan is a foundation for security and prosperity, not just for our two countries but for the Asia Pacific region. In a few months, we'll be marking the 50th anniversary of our alliance, which is founded on shared values and shared interests, that has served our people so well and has provided peace and security for the region in an unprecedented way.

That anniversary, as Prime Minister Hatoyama pointed out, represents an important opportunity to step back and reflect on what we've achieved, celebrate our friendship, but also find ways to renew this alliance and refresh it for the 21st century. Both Yukio and I were elected on the promise of change, but there should be no doubt, as we move our nations in a new direction, our alliance will endure and our efforts will be focused on revitalizing that friendship so that it's even stronger and more successful in meeting the challenges of the 21st century. It's essential for the United States, it's essential for Japan, and it's essential for the Asia Pacific region.

Throughout my trip and throughout my Presidency, I intend to make clear that the United States is a Pacific nation, and we will be deepening our engagement in this part of the world. As I said to Prime Minister Hatoyama, the United States will strengthen our alliances, build new partnerships, and we will be part of multilateral efforts and regional

institutions that advance regional security and prosperity.

We have to understand that the future of the United States and Asia is inextricably linked. The issues that matter most to our people, issues of economic growth and job creation, nonproliferation, clean energy, these are all issues that have to be part of a joint agenda. And we had very productive discussions about these issues this evening.

It's true that because of the strength of our economic ties, that was not the first item on our agenda, but we are fortunately going to have the opportunity to spend a lot of time discussing that in Singapore in the coming days. As the world's two leading economies, we have spent a lot of time working together in the G–20 to help bring the world back from the brink of financial crisis, and we're going to continue to work to strengthen our efforts so that we can expand job growth in the future. And we will be discussing with our APEC partners how to rebalance our deep economic cooperation with this region to strengthen our recovery.

The Prime Minister and I discussed our cooperation on Afghanistan and Pakistan. And I did thank the people of Japan and the Prime Ministers for the powerful commitment of a—$5 billion over the next 5 years to support our shared civilian efforts in Afghanistan, as well as the commitment of a billion dollars to Pakistan.

This underscores Japan's prominent role within a broad international coalition that is advancing the cause of stability and opportunity in Afghanistan and Pakistan. And I shared with the Prime Minister our efforts in refining our approach to make it more successful in the coming year.

We discussed our shared commitment to stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and, ultimately, seeking a world without them. Since I laid out a comprehensive agenda in Prague to pursue these goals, Japan has been an outstanding partner in those efforts. And together, we passed a historic resolution in the Security Council last September. We are building a new international consensus to secure loose nuclear materials and strengthen the nonproliferation regime.

And to that end, we discussed both North Korea and the situation in Iran, recognizing that it's absolutely vital that both countries meet their international obligations. If they do, then they can open the door to a better future. If not, we will remain united in implementing U.N. resolutions that are in place and continuing to work in an international context to move towards an agenda of nonproliferation.

Finally, we discussed our partnership on energy issues and climate change. The United States and Japan share a commitment to developing the clean energy of the future, and we're focused on combating the threat of climate change. This is an important priority for us; I know it's an important priority for the people of Japan. And we discussed how we can work together to pave the way for a successful outcome in Copenhagen next month.

So I believe that we are off to a very successful start. I'm looking forward to continuing the conversation during dinner, as well as, as we both travel to Singapore. And I am confident that we will continue to strengthen the U.S.-Japan alliance so that it serves future generations.

Thank you very much.

Moderator. Thank you very much. Now I'd like to proceed to questions. I will appoint the person, and once you are appointed, please come to the microphone, state your name and affiliation and also to whom—please make clear to whom you want to pose your question.

On behalf of the Japanese press, please.

Japan-U.S. Relations/U.S. Military Installations in Japan/Nuclear Nonproliferation

Q. Fuji Television. Matsuyama is my name. I'd like to ask both leaders—first to Prime Minister Hatoyama, you have stated that you would like to see Japan enjoy a more equal relationship with the United States in talks about Afghanistan and also the stop—the ending of the refueling operations and global warming and nuclear disarmament. Do you think that you're able to talk as equal partners and gain understanding on this point, especially on the Futenma relocation? How—there is the observation that this will be a difficult issue to resolve, but how did you explain about how to resolve the timeline for resolving this issue?

And to President Obama, you are a proponent of a nuclear-free world, and you've stated, possible, you would like to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki while in office. Do you have this desire? And what is your understanding of the historical meaning of the A-bombing in Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Do you think that it was the right decision?

And also considering the North Korean situation, how do you think the U.S.-Japan alliance should be strengthened, and how should both countries cooperate in the field of nuclear disarmament?

And also on the Futenma relocation issue, by when do you think the issue needs to be resolved? And, well, if should it be that Japan carry over the discussion—decision to next year or decide on something outside of what is being discussed, how would you respond?

Moderator. Starting with Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Hatoyama. Let me start. Well, you've asked a great deal of questions to, especially, President Obama, but I'd like to talk about the equal relationship. But before I state so, the President himself has said, naturally, that we are equal partners and should be equal partners. So in this context, we have talked about the assistance to Afghanistan, climate change, and furthermore, nuclear abolishment. And I think you can ask him, but I do believe that he has regarded us, Japan, as an equal partner. I have raised a number of issues on my side, and I think this is proof of our equal partnership.

On the issue of the relocation of the Futenma Air Station, in regards to this issue, well, to give you the conclusion, there is the high-level working group. We've set up this group so as to be able to resolve the issue as early as possible. I've stated this, and my commitment was also expressed during our talks.

But before that, I have explained why we have this discussion, and under the previous Government, the U.S.-Japan agreement needs to be regarded seriously. During the election campaign, especially to the Okinawans, I've stated that we would consider relocation outside of Okinawa and outside of the country. It is a fact that we did campaign on this issue, and the Okinawans do have high expectations.

It will be a very difficult issue for sure, but as time goes by, I think it will become even more difficult to resolve the issue. Especially the residents in the Futenma district will find it even more difficult to resolve the issue as time goes by. So we do understand that we need to resolve the issue as soon as possible, and we'll make every effort to resolve the issue as quickly as possible within the working group.

And we hope that this will lead the way to strengthening our alliance, and I sincerely hope that such discussions will take place within the working group. And this is something that I have communicated to the President.

Moderator. President, please.

President Obama. Well, first of all, I am impressed that Japanese journalists use the same strategy as American journalists—[*laughter*]—in asking multiple questions.

Let me, first of all, insist that the United States and Japan are equal partners. We have been, and we will continue to be. Each country brings specific assets and strengths to the relationship, but we proceed based on mutual interest and mutual respect, and that will continue.

That's reflected in the Japan-U.S. alliance. It will be reflected in the resolution of the base realignment issues related to Futenma. As the Prime Minister indicated, we discussed this. The United States and Japan have set up a high-level working group that will focus on implementation of the agreement that our two Governments reached with respect to the restructuring of U.S. forces in Okinawa, and we hope to complete this work expeditiously.

Our goal remains the same, and that's to provide for the defense of Japan with minimal intrusion on the lives of the people who share this space. And I have to say that I am extraordinarily proud and grateful for the men and women in uniform from the United States who help us to honor our obligations to the alliance and our treaties.

With respect to nuclear weapons and the issues of nonproliferation, this is an area where Prime Minister Hatoyama and I have discussed repeatedly in our meetings. We share, I

think, a vision of a world without nuclear weapons. We recognize, though, that this is a distant goal, and we have to take specific steps in the interim to meet this goal. It will take time. It will not be reached probably even in our own lifetimes. But in seeking this goal, we can stop the spread of nuclear weapons, we can secure loose nuclear weapons, we can strengthen the nonproliferation regime.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, we will retain our deterrent for our people and our allies, but we are already taking steps to bring down our nuclear stockpiles and—in cooperation with the Russian Government—and we want to continue to work on the nonproliferation issues.

Now, obviously, Japan has unique perspective on the issue of nuclear weapons as a consequence of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And that, I'm sure, helps to motivate the Prime Minister's deep interest in this issue. I certainly would be honored, it would be meaningful for me, to visit those two cities in the future. I don't have immediate travel plans, but it's something that would be meaningful to me.

You had one more question, and I'm not sure I remember it. Was it North Korea?

North Korea

Q. It was whether or not you believe that the U.S. dropped a nuclear weapon on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it was right?

President Obama. No, there were three sets of questions, right? You asked about North Korea?

Q. Yes, North Korea as well, yes.

President Obama. Yes. With respect to North Korea, we had a extensive discussion about how we should proceed with Pyongyang. Obviously, we were disturbed by the testing that took place, some of the belligerent actions that had taken place in an earlier period of this year. We have continued to say that our goal is a nonnuclear Korean Peninsula. That's vital for the security of East Asia.

And the United States and Japan, with the other members of the six-party talks, will continue to work to show North Korea that there is a pathway, a door, for them to rejoin the international community that would serve their people well and, I believe, enhance their security over the long term. They have to walk through that door. In the meantime, we will continue to implement the sanctions that have already been put in place, and we will continue to coordinate closely with Japan and the other six-party members in helping to shape a strategy that meets our security needs and convinces Pyongyang to move in a better direction. Okay.

White House Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs. Jennifer Loven with AP [Associated Press], questions fewer in number. [*Laughter*]

Trial of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed/Military Operations in Afghanistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister. President Obama, on—how can you assure the American people that a trial of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed—now that your administration has now decided will take place in a civilian court in New York—will be safe and secure, but also not result in an innocent verdict for him?

And on Afghanistan, if I might, can you explain to people watching and criticizing your deliberations what piece of information you're still lacking to make that call?

And if I could add one to the Prime Minister, please. Can you explain why your country decided not to continue refueling ships going to Afghanistan?

Moderator. Mr. President.

President Obama. With respect to Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, I believe that the Attorney General is going to be making an announcement this morning in the United States, this evening here. I don't want to preempt his news conference. This is a prosecutorial decision as well as a national security decision.

Here's the thing that I will say. I am absolutely convinced that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed will be subject to the most exacting demands of justice. The American people will insist on it, and my administration will insist on it. And I'm sure we'll have additional things to say after the Attorney General's press conference.

With respect to Afghanistan, Jennifer, I don't think this is a matter of some datum of information that I'm waiting on. It's a matter of making certain that when I send young men and women into war and I devote billions of dollars of

U.S. taxpayer money, that it's making us safer, and that the strategies that are placed not just on the military side but also on the civilian side are coordinated and effective in our primary goal, which is to make sure that the United States is not subject to attack and its allies are not subject to attack by terrorist networks, and that there is a stability in the region that helps to facilitate that larger goal.

And I recognize that there have been critics of the process. They tend not to be folks who, I think, are directly involved in what's happening in Afghanistan. Those who are recognize the gravity of the situation and recognize the importance of us getting this right.

And the decision will be made soon. It will be one that is fully transparent so that the American people understand exactly what we're doing and why we're doing it and what it will entail. It will also, I think, send a clear message that our goal here, ultimately, has to be for the Afghan people to be able to be in a position to provide their own security, and that the United States cannot be engaged in an open-ended commitment.

So I am very pleased with how the process has proceeded. And those who participated, I think, would acknowledge that it has been not a academic exercise, but a necessary process in order to make sure that we're making the best possible decisions.

Moderator. Prime Minister Hatoyama.

Prime Minister Hatoyama. I thank you for keeping it to just one question, having come all the way to Japan. Now, your question was about why we ended the refueling in the Indian Ocean. And we believe that Japan's assistance to Afghanistan will, in the larger context—terms should be considered. And—well, as antiterrorism, you know, to eradicate terrorism, there is a need to take certain measures, but we have to consider what Japan should be doing in terms of antiterrorism. I think that it's important that we extend civilian support so as to eliminate terrorism from its roots. And I do believe that this is appropriate for Japan, and this is the first focal point I want to communicate to you.

And also, the refueling support, I've looked at the activities. Compared to the beginning, recently the refueling support is declining. Last month, in 1 month, there was only one—refueling for one ship. And we wonder how much effect we are bringing about. And so I think that we have to consider the meaning of this logistic support, and we've come to think that there is another type of assistance that is more appropriate for Japan.

We understand that the Afghans are suffering from poverty, and we have to save them from poverty. Also, security is something of a challenge, and we need to take new activities. And also, to the former soldiers, we have to provide vocational training so that they do not have to rely on their guns and they can lay down their guns and seek a more fulfilling life.

And I believe that for Japan, it is more appropriate, desirable, that we provide such civilian assistance. And as a result, conclusion, we have decided that instead of providing refueling, we provide an alternative package.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 8:24 p.m. in the Kantei. In his remarks, he referred to Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, former senior leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization, currently in U.S. military custody. Prime Minister Hatoyama referred to U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth. Prime Minister Hatoyama and a reporter spoke in Japanese, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks in Tokyo
November 14, 2009

Thank you so much. *Arigato*. Thank you so much. Please. Good morning. It is a great honor to be in Tokyo, the first stop on my first visit to Asia as President of the United States. And it is good to be—[*applause*]. Thank you. It is good to be among so many of you—Japanese and I see a few Americans here—who work every day to strengthen the bonds between

our two countries, including my longtime friend and our new Ambassador to Japan, John Roos.

It is wonderful to be back in Japan. Some of you may be aware that when I was a young boy, my mother brought me to Kamakura, where I looked up at that centuries-old symbol of peace and tranquility, the great bronze Amida Buddha. And as a child, I was more focused on the *matcha* ice cream. [*Laughter*] And I want to thank Prime Minister Hatoyama for sharing some of those memories with more ice cream last night at dinner. [*Laughter*] Thank you very much. But I have never forgotten the warmth and the hospitality that the Japanese people showed a young American far from home.

And I feel that same spirit on this visit in the gracious welcome of Prime Minister Hatoyama, in the extraordinary honor of the meeting with Their Imperial Majesties, the Emperor and Empress, on the 20th anniversary of his ascension to the Chrysanthemum Throne, in the hospitality shown by the Japanese people. And of course, I could not come here without sending my greetings and gratitude to the citizens of Obama, Japan.

Now, I am beginning my journey here for a simple reason. Since taking office, I have worked to renew American leadership and pursue a new era of engagement with the world based on mutual interests and mutual respect. And our efforts in the Asia Pacific will be rooted, in no small measure, through an enduring and revitalized alliance between the United States and Japan.

From my very first days in office, we have worked to strengthen the ties that bind our nations. The first foreign leader that I welcomed to the White House was the Prime Minister of Japan, and for the first time in nearly 50 years, the first foreign trip by an American Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, was to Asia, starting in Japan.

In 2 months, our alliance will mark its 50th anniversary, a day when President Dwight Eisenhower stood next to Japan's Prime Minister and said that our two nations were creating "an indestructible partnership" based on "equality and mutual understanding."

In the half-century since, that alliance has endured as a foundation for our security and prosperity. It has helped us become the world's two largest economies, with Japan emerging as America's second largest trading partner outside of North America. It has evolved as Japan has played a larger role on the world stage and made important contributions to stability around the world, from reconstruction in Iraq to combating piracy off the Horn of Africa to assistance for the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan, most recently through its remarkable leadership in providing additional commitments to international development efforts there.

Above all, our alliance has endured because it reflects our common values: a belief in the democratic right of free people to choose their own leaders and realize their own dreams; a belief that made possible the election of both Prime Minister Hatoyama and myself on the promise of change. And together, we are committed to providing a new generation of leadership for our people and our alliance.

And that is why, at this critical moment in history, the two of us have not only reaffirmed our alliance, we've agreed to deepen it. We've agreed to move expeditiously through a joint working group to implement the agreement that our two Governments reached on restructuring U.S. forces in Okinawa. And as our alliance evolves and adapts for the future, we will always strive to uphold the spirit that President Eisenhower described long ago, a partnership of equality and mutual respect.

But while our commitment to this region begins in Japan, it doesn't end there. The United States of America may have started as a series of ports and cities along the Atlantic Ocean, but for generations, we have also been a nation of the Pacific. Asia and the United States are not separated by this great ocean, we are bound by it. We are bound by our past, by the Asian immigrants who helped build America and the generations of Americans in uniform who served and sacrificed to keep this region secure and free. We are bound by our shared prosperity, by the trade and commerce upon which millions of jobs and families depend. And we are bound by our people, by the Asian Americans who enrich every segment of American life and all the people whose lives, like our countries, are interwoven.

My own life is a part of that story. I am an American President who was born in Hawaii and lived in Indonesia as a boy. My sister Maya was born in Jakarta and later married a Chinese Canadian. My mother spent nearly a decade working in the villages of Southeast Asia, helping women buy a sewing machine or an education that might give them a foothold in the world economy. So the Pacific Rim has helped shape my view of the world.

And since that time, perhaps no region has changed as swiftly or dramatically. Controlled economies have given way to open markets. Dictatorships have become democracies. Living standards have risen while poverty has plummeted. And through all these changes, the fortunes of America and the Asia Pacific have become more closely linked than ever before.

So I want everyone to know, and I want everybody in America to know, that we have a stake in the future of this region, because what happens here has a direct effect on our lives at home. This is where we engage in much of our commerce and buy many of our goods, and this is where we can export more of our own products and create jobs back home in the process. This is a place where the risk of a nuclear arms race threatens the security of the wider world and where extremists who defile a great religion plan attacks on both our continents. And there can be no solution to our energy security and our climate challenge without the rising powers and developing nations of the Asia Pacific.

To meet these common challenges, the United States looks to strengthen old alliances and build new partnerships with the nations of this region. To do this, we look to America's treaty alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, Thailand, and the Philippines, alliances that are not historical documents from a bygone era, but abiding commitments to each other that are fundamental to our shared security.

Now, these alliances continue to provide the bedrock of security and stability that has allowed the nations and peoples of this region to pursue opportunity and prosperity that was unimaginable at the time of my first childhood visit to Japan. And even as American troops are engaged in two wars around the world, our commitment to Japan's security and to Asia's security is unshakeable, and it can be seen in our deployments throughout the region, above all, through our young men and women in uniform, of whom I am so proud.

Now, we look to emerging nations that are poised as well to play a larger role, both in the Asia Pacific region and the wider world, places like Indonesia and Malaysia that have adopted democracy, developed their economies, and tapped the great potential of their own people.

We look to rising powers with the view that in the 21st century, the national security and economic growth of one country need not come at the expense of another. I know there are many who questioned how the United States perceives China's emergence. But as I have said, in an interconnected world, power does not need to be a zero-sum game and nations need not fear the success of another. Cultivating spheres of cooperation—not competing spheres of influence—will lead to progress in the Asia Pacific.

Now, as with any nation, America will approach China with a focus on our interests. But it's precisely for this reason that it is important to pursue pragmatic cooperation with China on issues of mutual concern, because no one nation can meet the challenges of the 21st century alone, and the United States and China will both be better off when we are able to meet them together. That's why we welcome China's effort to play a greater role on the world stage, a role in which their growing economy is joined by growing responsibility. China's partnership has proved critical in our effort to jump-start economic recovery. China has promoted security and stability in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and it is now committed to the global nonproliferation regime and supporting the pursuit of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

So the United States does not seek to contain China, nor does a deeper relationship with China mean a weakening of our bilateral alliances. On the contrary, the rise of a strong and prosperous China can be a source of strength for the community of nations.

And so in Beijing and beyond, we will work to deepen our strategic and economic dialogue and improve communication between our militaries. Of course, we will not agree on every issue, and the United States will never waver in speaking up for the fundamental values that we hold dear—and that includes respect for the religion and cultures of all people—because support for human rights and human dignity is ingrained in America. But we can move these discussions forward in a spirit of partnership rather than rancor.

In addition to our bilateral relations, we also believe that the growth of multilateral organizations can advance the security and prosperity of this region. I know that the United States has been disengaged from many of these organizations in recent years. So let me be clear: Those days have passed. As a Asia Pacific nation, the United States expects to be involved in the discussions that shape the future of this region and to participate fully in appropriate organizations as they are established and evolve.

That is the work that I will begin on this trip. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum will continue to promote regional commerce and prosperity, and I look forward to participating in that forum this evening. ASEAN will remain a catalyst for Southeast Asian dialogue, cooperation, and security, and I look forward to becoming the first American President to meet with all 10 ASEAN leaders. And the United States looks forward to engaging with the East Asia summit more formally as it plays a role in addressing the challenges of our time.

We seek this deeper and broader engagement because we know our collective future depends on it. And I'd like to speak for a bit about what that future might look like and what we must do to advance our prosperity, our security, and our universal values and aspirations.

First, we must strengthen our economic recovery and pursue growth that is both balanced and sustained. The quick, unprecedented, and coordinated action taken by Asia Pacific nations and others has averted economic catastrophe and helped us to begin to emerge from the worst recession in generations. And we have taken the historic step of reforming our international economic architecture so that the G–20 is now the premier forum for international economic cooperation.

Now, this shift to the G–20, along with the greater voice that is being given to Asian nations in international financial institutions, clearly demonstrates the broader, more inclusive engagement that America seeks in the 21st century. And as a key member of the G–8, Japan has and will continue to play a leading and vital role in shaping the future of the international financial architecture.

Now that we are on the brink of economic recovery, we must also ensure that it can be sustained. We simply cannot return to the same cycles of boom and bust that led to a global recession. We can't follow the same policies that led to such imbalanced growth. One of the important lessons this recession has taught us is the limits of depending primarily on American consumers and Asian exports to drive growth, because when Americans found themselves too heavily in debt or lost their jobs and were out of work, demand for Asian goods plummeted. When demand fell sharply, exports from this region fell sharply. Since the economies of this region are so dependent on exports, they stopped growing and the global recession only deepened.

So we have now reached one of those rare inflection points in history where we have the opportunity to take a different path. And that must begin with the G–20 pledge that we made in Pittsburgh to pursue a new strategy for balanced economic growth.

I'll be saying more about this in Singapore, but in the United States, this new strategy will mean that we save more and spend less, reform our financial systems, reduce our long-term deficit and borrowing. It will also mean a greater emphasis on exports that we can build, produce, and sell all over the world. For America, this is a jobs strategy. Right now our exports support millions upon millions of well paying American jobs. Increasing those exports by just a small amount has the potential to create millions more. These are jobs making everything from wind turbines and solar panels to the technology that you use every day.

For Asia, striking this better balance will provide an opportunity for workers and consumers

to enjoy higher standards of living that their remarkable increases in productivity have made possible. It will allow for greater investments in housing and infrastructure and the service sector. And a more balanced global economy will lead to prosperity that reaches further and deeper.

For decades, the United States has had one of the most open markets in the world, and that openness has helped to fuel the success of so many countries in this region and others over the last century. In this new era, opening other markets around the globe will be critical, not just to America's prosperity but to the world's as well.

Now, an integral part of this new strategy is working towards an ambitious and balanced Doha agreement, not any agreement, but an agreement that will open up markets and increase exports around the world. And we are ready to work with our Asian partners to see if we can achieve that objective in a timely fashion, and we invite our regional trading partners to join us at the table.

We also believe that continued integration of the economies of this region will benefit workers, consumers, and businesses in all our nations. Together with our South Korean friends, we will work through the issues necessary to move forward on a trade agreement with them. The United States will also be engaging with the Trans-Pacific Partnership countries with the goal of shaping a regional agreement that will have broad-based membership and the high standards worthy of a 21st-century trade agreement.

Working in partnership, this is how we can sustain this recovery and advance our common prosperity. But it's not enough to pursue growth that is balanced. We also need growth that is sustainable for our planet and the future generations that will live here.

Already, the United States has taken more steps to combat climate change in 10 months than we have in our recent history, by embracing the latest science, by investing in new energy, by raising efficiency standards, forging new partnerships, and engaging in international climate negotiations. In short, America knows there is more work to do, but we are meeting our responsibility and will continue to do so.

And that includes striving for success in Copenhagen. I have no illusions that this will be easy, but the contours of a way forward are clear. All nations must accept their responsibility. Those nations, like my own, who have been the leading emitters must have clear reduction targets. Developing countries will need to take substantial actions to curb their emissions, aided by finance and technology. And there must be transparency and accountability for domestic actions.

Each of us must do what we can to grow our economies without endangering our planet, and we must do it together. But the good news is that if we put the right rules and incentives in place, it will unleash the creative power of our best scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs. It will lead to new jobs, new businesses, and entire new industries. And Japan has been at the forefront on this issue. We are looking forward to being a important partner with you as we achieve this critical global goal.

Yet even as we confront this challenge of the 21st century, we must also redouble our efforts to meet a threat to our security that is the legacy of the 20th century: the danger posed by nuclear weapons.

In Prague, I affirmed America's commitment to rid the world of nuclear weapons and laid out a comprehensive agenda to pursue this goal. I am pleased that Japan has joined us in this effort, for no two nations on Earth know better what these weapons can do, and together, we must seek a future without them. This is fundamental to our common security, and this is a great test of our common humanity. Our very future hangs in the balance.

Now, let me be clear: So long as these weapons exist, the United States will maintain a strong and effective nuclear deterrent that guarantees the defense of our allies, including South Korea and Japan.

But we must recognize that an escalating nuclear arms race in this region would undermine decades of growth and prosperity. So we are called upon to uphold the basic bargain of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: that all nations have a right to peaceful nuclear

energy; that nations with nuclear weapons have a responsibility to move toward nuclear disarmament; and those without nuclear weapons have a responsibility to forsake them.

Indeed, Japan serves as an example to the world that true peace and power can be achieved by taking this path. For decades, Japan has enjoyed the benefits of peaceful nuclear energy, while rejecting nuclear arms development, and by any measure, this has increased Japan's security and enhanced its position.

And to meet our responsibilities and to move forward with the agenda I laid out in Prague, we have passed, with the help of Japan, a unanimous U.N. Security Council resolution embracing this international effort. We are pursuing a new agreement with Russia to reduce our nuclear stockpiles. We will work to ratify and bring into force the test ban treaty. And next year at our nuclear security summit, we will advance our goal of securing all the world's vulnerable nuclear materials within 4 years.

Now, as I've said before, strengthening the global nonproliferation regime is not about singling out any individual nations. It's about all nations living up to their responsibilities. That includes the Islamic Republic of Iran, and it includes North Korea.

For decades, North Korea has chosen a path of confrontation and provocation, including the pursuit of nuclear weapons. It should be clear where this path leads. We have tightened sanctions on Pyongyang. We have passed the most sweeping U.N. Security Council resolution to date to restrict their weapons of mass destruction activities. We will not be cowed by threats, and we will continue to send a clear message through our actions and not just our words: North Korea's refusal to meet its international obligations will lead only to less security, not more.

Yet there is another path that can be taken. Working in tandem with our partners, supported by direct diplomacy, the United States is prepared to offer North Korea a different future. Instead of an isolation that has compounded the horrific repression of its own people, North Korea could have a future of international integration. Instead of gripping poverty, it could have a future of economic opportunity where trade and investment and tourism can offer the North Korean people the chance at a better life. And instead of increasing insecurity, it could have a future of greater security and respect. This respect cannot be earned through belligerence. It must be reached by a nation that takes its place in the international community by fully living up to its international obligations.

So the path for North Korea to realize this future is clear: a return to the six-party talks, upholding previous commitments, including a return to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the full and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. And full normalization with its neighbors can also only come if Japanese families receive a full accounting of those who have been abducted. These are all steps that can be taken by the North Korean Government if they are interested in improving the lives of their people and joining the community of nations.

And as we are vigilant in confronting this challenge, we will stand with all of our Asian partners in combating the transnational threats of the 21st century by rooting out the extremists who slaughter the innocent and stopping the piracy that threatens our sea lanes, by enhancing our efforts to stop infectious disease and working to end extreme poverty in our time, and by shutting down the traffickers who exploit women, children, and migrants and putting a stop to this scourge of modern-day slavery once and for all. Indeed, the final area in which we must work together is in upholding the fundamental rights and dignity of all human beings.

The Asia Pacific region is rich with many cultures. It is marked by extraordinary traditions and strong national histories. And time and again, we have seen the remarkable talent and drive of the peoples of this region in advancing human progress. Yet this much is also clear: Indigenous cultures and economic growth have not been stymied by respect for human rights; they have been strengthened by it. Supporting human rights provides lasting security that cannot be purchased in any other way. That is the story that can be seen in Japan's democracy, just as it can be seen in America's democracy.

The longing for liberty and dignity is a part of the story of all peoples. For there are certain aspirations that human beings hold in common: the freedom to speak your mind and choose your leaders, the ability to access information and worship how you please, confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice. These are not impediments to stability; they are the cornerstones of stability. And we will always stand on the side of those who seek these rights.

That truth, for example, guides our new approach to Burma. Despite years of good intentions, neither sanctions by the United States nor engagement by others succeeded in improving the lives of the Burmese people. So we are now communicating directly with the leadership to make it clear that existing sanctions will remain until there are concrete steps toward democratic reform. We support a Burma that is unified, peaceful, prosperous, and democratic. And as Burma moves in that direction, a better relationship with the United States is possible.

There are clear steps that must be taken: the unconditional release of all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, an end to conflicts with minority groups, and a genuine dialogue between the Government, the democratic opposition, and minority groups on a shared vision for the future. That is how a Government in Burma will be able to respond to the needs of its people. That is the path that will bring Burma true security and prosperity.

These are steps that the United States will take to improve prosperity, security, and human dignity in the Asia Pacific. We will do so through our close friendship with Japan, which will always be a centerpiece of our efforts in the region. We will do so as a partner through the broader engagement that I've discussed today. We will do so as a Pacific nation with a President who was shaped in part by this piece of the globe. And we will do so with the same sense of purpose that has guided our ties with the Japanese people for nearly 50 years.

The story of how these ties were forged dates back to the middle of the last century, sometime after the guns of war had quieted in the Pacific. It was then that America's commitment to the security and stability of Japan, along with the Japanese people's spirit of resilience and industriousness, led to what's been called "the Japanese miracle," a period of economic growth that was faster and more robust than anything the world had seen for some time.

In the coming years and decades, this miracle would spread throughout the region, and in a single generation, the lives and fortunes of millions were forever changed for the better. It is progress that has been supported by a hard-earned peace and strengthened by new bridges of mutual understanding that have bound together the nations of this vast and sprawling space.

But we know that there's still work to be done so that new breakthroughs in science and technology can lead to jobs on both sides of the Pacific and security from a warming planet; so that we can reverse the spread of deadly weapons, and on a divided peninsula, the people of South can be free from fear and those in the North can live free from want; so that a young girl can be valued not for her body but for her mind; and so that young people everywhere can go as far as their talent, their drive, and their choices will take them.

None of this will come easy, nor without setback or struggle. But at this moment of renewal, in this land of miracles, history tells us it is possible. This is the—America's agenda. This is the purpose of our partnership with Japan and with the nations and peoples of this region. And there must be no doubt: As America's first Pacific President, I promise you that this Pacific nation will strengthen and sustain our leadership in this vitally important part of the world.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. in Suntory Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Emperor Akihito, Empress Michiko, and former Prime Minister Taro Aso of Japan; and Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National

League of Democracy in Burma. He also referred to his brother-in-law Konrad Ng. The Office of the Press Secretary also released Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese, and Korean language transcripts of these remarks.

The President's Weekly Address
November 14, 2009

This was a week for honoring the extraordinary service and profound sacrifice of our men and women in uniform. Every fall we set aside a special day to pay tribute to our veterans. But this year, Veterans Day took on an even greater poignancy and meaning because of the tragic events at Fort Hood.

On Tuesday, I traveled there to join with the Fort Hood community, the Army, and friends and families of the victims to honor 13 of our fellow Americans who died and the dozens more who were wounded, not on some distant shore, but on a military base here at home.

Every man and woman who signs up for military service does so with the full knowledge of the dangers that could come; that's part of what makes the service of our troops and veterans so extraordinary. But it's unthinkable that so many would die in a hail of gunfire on a U.S. Army base in the heart of Texas and that a fellow servicemember could have pulled the trigger.

There is an ongoing investigation into this terrible tragedy. That investigation will look at the motives of the alleged gunman, including his views and contacts. As I said in Fort Hood, I am confident that justice will be done, and I will insist that the full story be told. That's paramount, and I won't compromise that investigation today by discussing the details of this case. But given the potential warning signs that may have been known prior to these shootings, we must uncover what steps, if any, could have been taken to avert this tragedy.

On the Thursday evening that this tragedy took place, I met in the Oval Office with Secretary of Defense Gates, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mullen, and FBI Director Mueller to review the immediate steps that were necessary to support the families and secure Fort Hood. The next morning I met with the leadership of our military and the intelligence community and ordered them to undertake a full review of the sequence of events that led up to the shootings.

The purpose of this review is clear: We must compile every piece of information that was known about the gunman, and we must learn what was done with that information. Once we have those facts, we must act upon them. If there was a failure to take appropriate action before the shootings, there must be accountability. Beyond that, and most importantly, we must quickly and thoroughly evaluate and address any flaws in the system, so that we can prevent a similar breach from happening again. Our Government must be able to act swiftly and surely when it has threatening information, and our troops must have the security that they deserve.

I know there will also be inquiries by Congress, and there should. But all of us should resist the temptation to turn this tragic event into the political theater that sometimes dominates the discussion here in Washington. The stakes are far too high.

Of all the responsibilities of the Presidency, the one that I weigh most heavily is my duty as Commander in Chief to our splendid service men and women. Their character and bravery were on full display in that processing center at Fort Hood, when so many scrambled under fire to help their wounded comrades. And their great dignity and decency has been on display in the days since as the Fort Hood community has rallied together.

We owe our troops prayerful, considered decisions about when and where we commit them to battle to protect our security and freedom, and we must fully support them when they are deployed. We also owe them the absolute assurance that they'll be safe here at home as they prepare for whatever mission may come. As Commander in Chief, I won't settle for anything less.

This Nation will never forget the service of those we lost at Fort Hood, just as we will always honor the service of all who wear the uniform of the United States of America. Their legacy will be an America that is safer and stronger, an America that reflects the extraordinary character of the men and women who serve it.

Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 12:05 p.m., e.s.t., on November 11 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on November 14. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 13, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m., e.s.t., on November 14. Due to the 14-hour time difference, the address was released after the President's remarks in Tokyo, Japan. In his address, the President referred to Army psychiatrist Maj. Nidal M. Hasan, suspected gunman in the November shootings at Fort Hood, TX.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia in Singapore
November 15, 2009

President Obama. Everybody set up? Well, I just had an excellent meeting once again with President Medvedev. We discussed two primary topics; one is our efforts to conclude a deal on the START Treaty. As many of you know, in our first meeting when I traveled to Moscow, we arrived at an understanding that it made sense for our two countries to begin reducing further our nuclear stockpiles. Our negotiators have made excellent progress over the last several months. Our goal continues to be to complete the negotiations and to be able to sign a deal before the end of the year. And I'm confident that if we work hard and with a sense of urgency about it, that we should be able to get that done. And I very much feel as if both sides are trying to work through some difficult technical issues but are doing so in good faith. And so I thank President Medvedev for his initiative and leadership on that issue.

The second issue that we discussed was the issue of Iran. Again, in my first meeting with President Medvedev, I emphasized to him our desire to try to resolve the issue of Iran's nuclear capacity in a constructive fashion. And it was my strong belief that if countries like the United States and Russia were able to present two paths, two roads to the Islamic Republic of Iran, one that led to further integration, the ability to obtain peaceful nuclear energy, but a insistence on Iran forsaking nuclear weapons, that that would be the most positive outcome.

The alternative would be an approach that would involve increasing pressure on Iran to meet its international obligations. These concerns were further heightened with the Qom facility that had not been properly disclosed. And since that time, we have continued to consult closely with the Russians in terms of providing Iran a very concrete, specific, and fair proposal for some confidence-building measures, including a proposal to get low-enriched uranium out of Iran, processed, and then sent back to Iran, to display their ability, essentially, to have peaceful nuclear energy without weaponization capacity.

Unfortunately, so far at least, Iran appears to have been unable to say yes to what everyone acknowledges is a creative and constructive approach. And that's not just the U.S. position, that's been the position of the IAEA and the Director General, Mohamed ElBaradei.

We are now running out of time with respect to that approach. And so I discussed with President Medvedev the fact that we have to continue to maintain urgency and that our previous discussions confirming the need for a dual-track approach are still the right approach to take. And we believe that the United States and Russia will continue to urge Iran to take the path that leads them to meeting its international obligations. We can't count on that, and we will begin to discuss and prepare for these other pathways.

The last thing I just want to mention is that we discussed some other issues, both economic and security-related issues, including Afghanistan. And I have found, as always, President Medvedev frank, thoughtful, and constructive in his approach to U.S.-Russia relations. And I am somebody who genuinely believes that the reset button has worked and that we are moving in a good direction.

Thank you.

President Medvedev. I'd like to say that we have indeed enjoyed constructive and the friendly atmosphere which is characteristic of our relations with President Obama. This is how we spent—we discussed a number of topics President Obama just outlined. Indeed, we've talked a lot about the future START Treaty and limitations of offensive weapons. We've agreed to give additional impetus to those negotiations, find solutions on remaining issues, because in some cases, those are technical issues. Some require political solution, but that is precisely why we discuss matters on level of the President. We'll task our aides to continue working on those matters.

I hope that, as was agreed initially during our first meeting in London, was reaffirmed during later meetings, we will be able to finalize the text of the document by December. This will be our joint contribution in strengthening global security, because this is precisely an issue where the position of Russian Federation, the United States, defines the overall environment on the limit of strategic forces, the launches.

And the world is watching. Even in the past, the situation and the world depended on us. It is all the more important now since there are no longer the old ideological barriers, and now we try to friendly and constructively resolve issues we face together.

Another topic we discussed with President Obama is Iran. Indeed, recently we've had a series of consultations where both parties participated. We have reached certain results, but I believe that, thanks to our joint efforts, this process did not stop, did not become a stumbling stone which is impossible to bypass. It is still underway. But nonetheless, we're still not satisfied with the pace of advancement of the process.

And I hope that as a result of our joint efforts with Iran, we will be able to reach agreements we've anticipated earlier and Iranian program will be peaceful and will not raise as many questions as our countries and the international community has at the moment. But to reach that, certain efforts are yet to be taken.

At the same time, as reasonable politicians, I hope we understand that any process must be terminant. Negotiation process is not for the pleasure of the process itself, but it is done in order to reach practical, specific outcomes. In this case, our goal is clear: It is transparent, up-to-date, peaceful program, not a program that would raise questions or concerns from the international community. We're prepared to work further, and I hope that our joint work will yield in positive results. In case we fail, the other options remain on the table in order to move the process in a different direction.

We've also talked about different issues with Mr. President. Luckily, our relations do not limit to just the START Treaty or global problems. We discussed economics. We talked of what needs to be done so as to finally bring peace to the long-suffered Afghani land, what needs to be done to create more adequate state which would be capable of tackling very different issues that Afghanistan is facing today. We are ready to work in that direction together.

I would like to thank my colleague, President Barack Obama, for discussing once again various issues in a good, friendly atmosphere, for his efforts to find solutions to problems that concern all the world. Thank you, Barack.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:35 p.m. at the Shangri-La Hotel. President Medvedev spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Singapore
November 15, 2009

President Obama. Well, good afternoon, everybody. We have just concluded the first-ever meeting between a United States President and the leaders of all 10 ASEAN countries. And I'd like to thank my friends Prime Minister Lee for hosting and Prime Minister Abhisit for cochairing this historic meeting.

As I said in Tokyo yesterday, the United States is a Pacific nation, and we enjoy deep historical ties to Southeast Asia, one of the most important and dynamic regions of the world. As the first U.S. President to have a personal connection to the region, I reaffirmed to my ASEAN friends that the United States is committed to strengthening its engagement in Southeast Asia both with our individual allies and partners and with ASEAN as an institution.

During our meeting, we talked about how the United States and ASEAN can work together as close partners, both within this region and throughout the world. We discussed the importance of meeting common challenges like climate change, nuclear proliferation, and working together in support of G–20 efforts to promote a sustained and balanced global economic recovery. And I reaffirmed the policy that I put forward yesterday in Tokyo with regard to Burma.

We also recognized the need for expanding high-level engagement on these and other major issues. I proposed sending Energy Secretary Steven Chu to the region next year to talk with his ASEAN counterparts about clean energy, and we agreed that our trade ministers should develop new initiatives to promote trade and investment that could create jobs and improve living standards in all our nations.

And finally, I stressed my strong support for ASEAN's ambitious goal of creating a community by 2015, including its bold effort to achieve economic integration, which will contribute to a sustained and lasting prosperity within this region and throughout the world.

We know that there's much work left to be done, but we also know that continued dialogue and engagement between our nations can help us meet the common challenges of the 21st century and achieve our common goals.

So it was an honor to take part in this historic meeting. I look forward to a second leaders meeting next year. And I am so appreciative that we had such an outstanding chair during the course of this meeting. Thank you very much.

Prime Minister Abhisit Wechachiwa of Thailand. As the President just said, we just had an historic meeting with the leaders of ASEAN and the United States. This has been made possible not because of—just because of the longstanding partnership between individual countries in this region and the United States and more than three decades of partnership between the U.S. and ASEAN, I think also due to his personal leadership and his commitment to reinvigorate engagement with the region.

We had a discussion on an impressive range of issues, particularly with the U.S. support for the community building efforts of ASEAN, ranging from issues like our cooperation on disaster management, trade and investment, and the creation of the economic community in ASEAN, as well as providing support for some of the new institutions like the Intergovernmental Human Rights Commission, which will be going to the U.S. to talk with the experts and consultations next year.

ASEAN also stands ready to be a reliable partner of the U.S. in attacking the various global and regional challenges, whether it's climate change, whether it's the Doha round, or counterterrorism and other security issues.

So this has been a historic meeting. We are pleased with the progress that this enhanced partnership has achieved. And we look forward to similar meetings next year.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:16 p.m. at the Shangri-La Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia in Singapore

November 15, 2009

President Obama. Hello, everybody. I just wanted to make a brief statement about the wonderful relationship that I've been able to develop with President Yudhoyono. As many of you know, I have some historic ties to Indonesia, but I am also extraordinarily impressed with the progress that Indonesia has made in developing its democracy. I want to congratulate the President for his recent reelection, and he now has his Government in place.

Indonesia is not only regionally important, but as a member of the G–20, as one of the world's largest democracies, as one of the world's largest Islamic nations, it has enormous influence and really is, I think, a potential model for the kind of development strategies, democracy strategies, as well as interfaith strategies that are going to be so important moving forward.

We had a strong discussion about a range of issues and how we can create even better bilateral relations than we already have, a comprehensive agreement—comprehensive partnership agreement that we're developing that will cover things like education, working on clean energy issues, expanding the Peace Corps' presence in Indonesia, counterterrorism issues. These are all areas in which we intend to focus in the months and years to come.

We discussed some of the broader challenges of getting a meaningful Copenhagen agreement and continuing to stabilize the world economy and promoting growth, both through trade and investment and also through what has been discussed throughout the ASEAN summit, the idea of inclusive development and growth where it's not just at the top but is spread out among the population.

So I am very excited about our prospects for deepening relations in the future, and I want to make sure that everybody knows that I intend to be visiting Indonesia next year. The invitation that's been extended to—by President Yudhoyono is one that I want to take up, and I'm hoping to be able to take Michelle and the girls as well so that they can take a look at some of my old haunting grounds. [*Laughter*] And again, I want to thank you, Mr. President, for your leadership and your commitment to improving ties between the United States and Indonesia. Thank you very much.

President Yudhoyono. Thank you. Yes, President Obama and I had a very good discussion on wide range of issues of common interests. President Obama is a friend of Indonesia. He knows Indonesia very well, and he is well respected in Indonesia.

In this meeting, I told President Obama that I really appreciate his fresh, new approach to the world, to many international issues, including his positive outreach to the Islamic world.

We also renewed our commitment to elevate our relation at higher level for comprehensive partnerships, and I welcome also the future cooperation between Indonesia and the United States in various fields such as trade and investment, education and technology, climate change, food and energy security, countering communicable diseases, and also counterterrorism and people-to-people contact.

And lastly, as has been shared by President Obama, I look forward to welcoming President Obama to Indonesia next year, and he will be warmly welcomed by the Indonesian people.

Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:06 p.m. at the Shangri-La Hotel. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Party Secretary of the Shanghai Municipal Committee Yu Zhengsheng in Shanghai, China
November 16, 2009

President Obama. Thank you so much for your hospitality. This is my first visit to Shanghai, and we've been so impressed with the incredible growth in the city and the great warmth of the people who have received us.

Secretary Yu. Shanghai is a city that witnessed the progress of the diplomatic relations between China and the United States over the past three decades. In 1972, Shanghai was a city where the Shanghai Communique was announced, and this has already made a solid foundation for the normalization of diplomatic ties between two countries.

President Obama. Well, obviously, both countries have benefited greatly from the progress that we've made over the last three decades. I know that many U.S. businesses are now located here in Shanghai and they consider it really the center for the region, commercially and financially. And it is very impressive to travel through the city and to see what extraordinary progress has been made.

Secretary Yu. The Shanghai citizens are very pleased because Shanghai is the first stop of your China visit.

President Obama. Well, thank you.

Secretary Yu. For many U.S. companies here in Shanghai, one of the most famous manufacturing companies is the General Motor. The business of GM in Shanghai is pretty good. By the end of October this year, their sales has increased by 40 percent over the same period of last year. I think that the fantastic performance here in Shanghai is definitely a boost to their business in the United States.

President Obama. Absolutely. I think they can learn from their operations here in terms of increasing sales back in the United States.

Secretary Yu. There are other businesses from the United States based here in Shanghai.

[*At this point, the public portion of the meeting ended; the meeting continued, however, and no transcript was provided.*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:03 a.m. at the Xijiao State Guest Hotel. Secretary Yu spoke in Chinese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Shanghai
November 16, 2009

The President. Nong hao. Good afternoon. It is a great honor for me to be here in Shanghai and to have this opportunity to speak with all of you. I'd like to thank Fudan University's President Yang for his hospitality and his gracious welcome. I'd also like to thank our outstanding Ambassador, Jon Huntsman, who exemplifies the deep ties and respect between our nations. I don't know what he said, but I hope it was good. [*Laughter*]

What I'd like to do is to make some opening remarks, and then what I'm really looking forward to doing is taking questions, not only from students who are in the audience, but also we've received questions online, which will be asked by some of the students who are here in the audience, as well as by Ambassador Huntsman. And I am very sorry that my Chinese is not as good as your English, but I am looking forward to this chance to have a dialogue.

This is my first time traveling to China, and I'm excited to see this majestic country. Here in Shanghai we see the growth that has caught the attention of the world, the soaring skyscrapers, the bustling streets, and entrepreneurial

activity. And just as I'm impressed by these signs of China's journey to the 21st century, I'm eager to see those ancient places that speak to us from China's distant past. Tomorrow and the next day I hope to have a chance when I'm in Beijing to see the majesty of the Forbidden City and the wonder of the Great Wall. Truly, this is a nation that encompasses both a rich history and a belief in the promise of the future.

The same can be said of the relationship between our two countries. Shanghai, of course, is a city that has great meaning in the history of the relationship between the United States and China. It was here, 37 years ago, that the Shanghai Communique opened the door to a new chapter of engagement between our Governments and among our people. However, America's ties to this city, and to this country, stretch back further, to the earliest days of America's independence.

In 1784, our Founding Father, George Washington, commissioned the *Empress of China*, a ship that set sail for these shores so that it could pursue trade with the Qing Dynasty. Washington wanted to see the ship carry the flag around the globe and to forge new ties with nations like China. This is a common American impulse, the desire to reach for new horizons and to forge new partnerships that are mutually beneficial.

Over the two centuries that have followed, the currents of history have steered the relationship between our countries in many directions. And even in the midst of tumultuous winds, our people had opportunities to forge deep and even dramatic ties. For instance, Americans will never forget the hospitality shown to our pilots who were shot down over your soil during World War II and cared for by Chinese civilians who risked all that they had by doing so. And Chinese veterans of that war still warmly greet those American veterans who return to the sites where they fought to help liberate China from occupation.

A different kind of connection was made nearly 40 years ago when the frost between our countries began to thaw through the simple game of table tennis. The very unlikely nature of this engagement contributed to its success, because for all our differences, both our common humanity and our shared curiosity were revealed. As one American player described his visit to China: "[The] people are just like us . . . The country is very similar to America, but still very different."

Of course this small opening was followed by the achievement of the Shanghai Communique, and the eventual establishment of formal relations between the United States and China in 1979. And in three decades, just look at how far we have come.

In 1979, trade between the United States and China stood at roughly $5 billion; today it tops over $400 billion each year. The commerce affects our people's lives in so many ways. America imports from China many of the computer parts we use, the clothes we wear, and we export to China machinery that helps power your industry. This trade could create even more jobs on both sides of the Pacific, while allowing our people to enjoy a better quality of life. And as demand becomes more balanced, it can lead to even broader prosperity.

In 1979, the political cooperation between the United States and China was rooted largely in our shared rivalry with the Soviet Union. Today, we have a positive, constructive, and comprehensive relationship that opens the door to partnership on the key global issues of our time: economic recovery and the development of clean energy; stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and the scourge of climate change; the promotion of peace and security in Asia and around the globe. All of these issues will be on the agenda tomorrow when I meet with President Hu.

And in 1979, the connections among our people were limited. Today, we see the curiosity of those ping-pong players manifested in the ties that are being forged across many sectors. The second highest number of foreign students in the United States come from China, and we've seen a 50 percent increase in the study of Chinese among our own students. There are nearly 200 friendship cities drawing our communities together. American and Chinese scientists cooperate on new research and discovery. And of course, Yao Ming is just one signal of our shared love of basketball. I'm only sorry

that I won't be able to see a Shanghai Sharks game while I'm visiting.

It is no coincidence that the relationship between our countries has accompanied a period of positive change. China has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, an accomplishment unparalleled in human history, while playing a larger role in global events. And the United States has seen our economy grow along with the standard of living enjoyed by our people, while bringing the cold war to a successful conclusion.

There is a Chinese proverb: "Consider the past, and you shall know the future." Surely, we have known setbacks and challenges over the last 30 years. Our relationship has not been without disagreement and difficulty. But the notion that we must be adversaries is not predestined, not when we consider the past. Indeed, because of our cooperation, both the United States and China are more prosperous and more secure. We have seen what is possible when we build upon our mutual interests and engage on the basis of mutual respect.

And yet the success of that engagement depends upon understanding, on sustaining an open dialogue and learning about one another and from one another. For just as that American table tennis player pointed out, we share much in common as human beings, but our countries are different in certain ways.

I believe that each country must chart its own course. China is an ancient nation with a deeply rooted culture. The United States, by comparison, is a young nation whose culture is determined by the many different immigrants who have come to our shores and by the founding documents that guide our democracy.

Those documents put forward a simple vision of human affairs, and they enshrine several core principles: that all men and women are created equal and possess certain fundamental rights; that Government should reflect the will of the people and respond to their wishes; that commerce should be open, information freely accessible; and that laws, and not simply men, should guarantee the administration of justice.

Of course, the story of our Nation is not without its difficult chapters. In many ways, over many years, we have struggled to advance the promise of these principles to all of our people and to forge a more perfect Union. We fought a very painful civil war and freed a portion of our population from slavery. It took time for women to be extended the right to vote, for workers to win the right to organize, and for immigrants from different corners of the globe to be fully embraced. Even after they were freed, African Americans persevered through conditions that were separate and not equal before winning full and equal rights.

None of this was easy, but we made progress because of our belief in those core principles, which have served as our compass through the darkest of storms. That is why Lincoln could stand up in the midst of civil war and declare it a struggle to see whether any nation, "conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal" could "long endure." That is why Dr. Martin Luther King could stand on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and ask that our Nation live out the true meaning of its creed. That's why immigrants from China to Kenya could find a home on our shores, why opportunity is available to all who would work for it, and why someone like me, who less than 50 years ago would have had trouble voting in some parts of America, is now able to serve as its President.

And that is why America will always speak out for these core principles around the world. We do not seek to impose any system of government on any other nation, but we also don't believe that the principles that we stand for are unique to our Nation. These freedoms of expression and worship, of access to information and political participation, we believe are universal rights. They should be available to all people, including ethnic and religious minorities, whether they are in the United States, China, or any nation. Indeed, it is that respect for universal rights that guides America's openness to other countries, our respect for different cultures, our commitment to international law, and our faith in the future.

These are all things that you should know about America. I also know that we have much

to learn about China. Looking around at this magnificent city and looking around this room, I do believe that our nations hold something important in common, and that is a belief in the future. Neither the United States nor China is content to rest on our achievements. For while China is an ancient nation, you are also clearly looking ahead with confidence, ambition, and a commitment to see that tomorrow's generation can do better than today's.

In addition to your growing economy, we admire China's extraordinary commitment to science and research, a commitment borne out in everything from the infrastructure you build to the technology you use. China is now the world's largest Internet user, which is why we were so pleased to include the Internet as a part of today's event. This country now has the world's largest mobile phone network, and it is investing in the new forms of energy that can both sustain growth and combat climate change. And I'm looking forward to deepening the partnership between the United States and China in this critical area tomorrow. But above all, I see China's future in you, young people whose talent and dedication and dreams will do so much to help shape the 21st century.

I've said many times that I believe that our world is now fundamentally interconnected. The jobs we do, the prosperity we build, the environment we protect, the security that we seek, all of these things are shared. And given that interconnection, power in the 21st century is no longer a zero-sum game; one country's success need not come at the expense of another. And that is why the United States insists we do not seek to contain China's rise. On the contrary, we welcome China as a strong and prosperous and successful member of the community of nations, a China that draws on the rights, strengths, and creativity of individual Chinese like you.

To return to the proverb, consider the past. We know that more is to be gained when great powers cooperate than when they collide. That is a lesson that human beings have learned time and again, and that is the example of the history between our nations. And I believe strongly that cooperation must go beyond our Government. It must be rooted in our people, in the studies we share, the business that we do, the knowledge that we gain, and even in the sports that we play. And these bridges must be built by young men and women just like you and your counterparts in America.

That's why I'm pleased to announce that the United States will dramatically expand the number of our students who study in China to 100,000. And these exchanges mark a clear commitment to build ties among our people, as surely as you will help determine the destiny of the 21st century. And I'm absolutely confident that America has no better ambassadors to offer than our young people. For they, just like you, are filled with talent and energy and optimism about the history that is yet to be written.

So let this be the next step in the steady pursuit of cooperation that will serve our nations and the world. And if there's one thing that we can take from today's dialogue, I hope that it is a commitment to continue this dialogue going forward.

So thank you very much, and I look forward now to taking some questions from all of you. Thank you very much.

So the—I just want to make sure this works. This is a tradition, by the way, that is very common in the United States at these town hall meetings. And what we're going to do is I will just—if you are interested in asking a question, you can raise your hands. I will call on you, and then I will alternate between a question from the audience and an Internet question from one of the students who prepared the questions, as well as, I think, Ambassador Huntsman may have a question that we were able to obtain from the web site of our Embassy.

So let me begin, though, by seeing—and then what I'll do is I'll call on a boy and then a girl and then—so we'll go back and forth, so that you know it's fair. All right? So I'll start with this young lady right in the front. Here, why don't we wait for this microphone so everyone can hear you? And what's your name?

China-U.S. Relations/World Exposition in Shanghai

Q. My name is—[*inaudible*]—and I am a student from Fudan University. Shanghai and Chicago have been sister cities since 1985, and

these two cities have conduct a wide range of economic, political, and cultural exchanges. So what measures will you take to deepen this close relationship between cities of the United States and China? And Shanghai will hold the World Exposition next year. Will you bring your family to visit the Expo? Thank you.

The President. Well, thank you very much for the question. I was just having lunch before I came here with the mayor of Shanghai, and he told me that he has had an excellent relationship with the city of Chicago—my hometown—that he's visited there twice. And I think it's wonderful to have these exchanges between cities.

One of the things that I discussed with the mayor is how both cities can learn from each other on strategies around clean energy, because one of the issues that ties China and America together is how, with an expanding population and a concern for climate change, that we're able to reduce our carbon footprint. And obviously, in the United States and many developed countries, per capita, per individual, they are already using much more energy than each individual here in China. But as China grows and expands, it's going to be using more energy as well. So both countries have a great interest in finding new strategies.

We talked about mass transit and the excellent rail lines that are being developed in Shanghai. I think we can learn in Chicago some of the—and the United States some of the fine work that's being done on high-speed rail.

In the United States, I think we are learning how to develop buildings that use much less energy, that are much more energy efficient. And I know that with Shanghai, as I traveled and I saw all the cranes and all the new buildings that are going up, it's very important for us to start incorporating these new technologies so that each building is energy efficient when it comes to lighting, when it comes to heating. And so it's a terrific opportunity, I think, for us to learn from each other.

I know this is going to be a major focus of the Shanghai World Expo, is the issue of clean energy, as I learned from the mayor. And so I would love to attend. I'm not sure yet what my schedule is going to be, but I'm very pleased that we're going to have an excellent U.S. pavilion at the Expo, and I understand that we expect as many as 70 million visitors here. So it's going to be very crowded, and it's going to be very exciting.

Chicago has had two world expos in its history, and both of those expos ended up being tremendous boosts for the city. So I'm sure the same thing will happen here in Shanghai.

Thank you.

Why don't we get one of the questions from the Internet? And introduce yourself, in case——

Importance of the President's Visit to China

Q. Hello? That's amazing. So shall I say it in Chinese and then repeat it English at the end, okay?

The President. Yes.

[*At this point, a student asked a question in Chinese, and it was translated as follows.*]

Q. I am—[*inaudible*]—from Shanghai Jiao Tong University. I want to pose a question from the Internet. I want to thank you, Mr. President, for visiting China in your first year in office and exchange views with us in China. I want to know what are you bringing to China, your visit to China this time, and what will you bring back to the United States?

[*The student continued in English.*]

Q. ——and I represent, I am—the honor about to be here to represent one of the friends from Internet, to ask you one question. Firstly, I thank—thanks for visiting China at the first year of your Presidency. And my question is, what have you—in this Chinese trip, what have you brought to China and what do you want from China? Thank you.

The President. The main purpose of my trip is to deepen my understanding of China and its vision for the future. I have had several meetings now with President Hu. We participated together in the G–20 that was dealing with the economic financial crisis. We have had consultations about a wide range of issues.

But I think it's very important for the United States to continually deepen its understanding of China, just as it's important for China to continually deepen its understanding of the United States.

In terms of what I'd like to get out of this meeting, or this visit, in addition to having the wonderful opportunity to see the Forbidden City and the Great Wall and to meet with all of you—these are all highlights—but in addition to that, the discussions that I intend to have with President Hu speak to the point that Ambassador Huntsman made earlier, which is there are very few global challenges that can be solved unless the United States and China agree.

So let me give you a specific example, and that is the issue we were just discussing of climate change. The United States and China are the world's two largest emitters of greenhouse gases, of carbon that is causing the planet to warm. Now, the United States, as a highly developed country, as I said before, per capita, consumes much more energy and emits much more greenhouse gases for each individual than does China. On the other hand, China is growing at a much faster pace, and it has a much larger population. So unless both of our countries are willing to take critical steps in dealing with this issue, we will not be able to resolve it.

There's going to be a Copenhagen conference in December in which world leaders are trying to find a recipe so that we can all make commitments that are differentiated so each country would not have the same obligations. Obviously, China, which has much more poverty, should not have to do exactly the same thing as the United States, but all of us should have these certain obligations in terms of what our plan will be to reduce these greenhouse gases.

So that's an example of what I hope to get out of this meeting, a meeting of the minds between myself and President Hu about how together the United States and China can show leadership. Because I will tell you, other countries around the world will be waiting for us. They will watch to see what we do. And if they say, "Ah, you know, the United States and China, they're not serious about this," then they won't be serious either. That is the burden of leadership that both of our countries now carry. And my hope is, is that the more discussion and dialogue that we have the more we are able to show this leadership to the world on these many critical issues. Okay?

All right, it's a—I think it must be a boy's turn now. Right? So I'll call on this young man right here.

[*The student began speaking in Chinese.*]

The President. Hold on, let me get my——

[*The President put on his translation headset.*]

Benefits of Diversity/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. Mr. President, good afternoon. I'm from Tongji University. I want to cite a saying from Confucius: "It is always good to have a friend coming from afar." In Confucius' books, there is a great saying which says that harmony is good, but also we uphold differences. China advocates a harmonious world. We know that the United States develops a culture that features diversity. I want to know, what will your Government do to build a diversified world with different cultures? What would you do to respect the different cultures and histories of other countries? And what kinds of cooperation we can conduct in the future?

The President. This is an excellent point. The United States, one of our strengths is that we are a very diverse culture. We have people coming from all around the world. And so there's no one definition of what an American looks like. In my own family, I have a father who was from Kenya; I have a mother who was from Kansas, in the Midwest of the United States; my sister is half Indonesian; she's married to a Chinese person from Canada. So when you see family gatherings in the Obama household, it looks like the United Nations. [*Laughter*]

And that is a great strength of the United States, because it means that we learn from different cultures and different foods and different ideas, and that has made us a much more dynamic society.

Now, what is also true is that each country in this interconnected world has its own culture and its own history and its own traditions. And I

think it's very important for the United States not to assume that what is good for us is automatically good for somebody else. And we have to have some modesty about our attitudes towards other countries.

I have to say, though, as I said in my opening remarks, that we do believe that there are certain fundamental principles that are common to all people, regardless of culture. So, for example, in the United Nations, we are very active in trying to make sure that children all around the world are treated with certain basic rights; that if children are being exploited, if there's forced labor for children, that despite the fact that that may have taken place in the past in many different countries, including the United States, that all countries of the world now should have developed to the point where we are treating children better than we did in the past. That's a universal value.

I believe, for example, the same thing holds true when it comes to the treatment of women. I had a very interesting discussion with the mayor of Shanghai during lunch right before I came, and he informed me that in many professions now here in China, there are actually more women enrolled in college than there are men, and that they are doing very well. I think that is an excellent indicator of progress, because it turns out that if you look at development around the world, one of the best indicators of whether or not a country does well is how well it educates its girls and how it treats its women. And countries that are tapping into the talents and the energy of women and giving them educations typically do better economically than countries that don't.

So now, obviously, difficult cultures may have different attitudes about the relationship between men and women, but I think it is the view of the United States that it is important for us to affirm the rights of women all around the world. And if we see certain societies in which women are oppressed or they are not getting opportunities or there is violence towards women, we will speak out.

Now, there may be some people who disagree with us, and we can have a dialogue about that. But we think it's important, nevertheless, to be true to our ideals and our values. And we—and when we do so, though, we will always do so with the humility and understanding that we are not perfect and that we still have much progress to make. If you talk to women in America, they will tell you that there are still men who have a lot of old-fashioned ideas about the role of women in society. And so we don't claim that we have solved all these problems, but we do think that it's important for us to speak out on behalf of these universal ideals and these universal values. Okay?

All right. We're going to take a question from the Internet.

China and Taiwan

Q. Hello, Mr. President. It's a great honor to be here and meet you in person.

The President. Thank you.

Q. My name is—[*inaudible*]. I'm from Shanghai International Studies University. I will be reading a question selected on the Internet to you, and this question is from somebody from Taiwan. In his question, he said: I come from Taiwan. Now I am doing business on the mainland, and due to improved cross-straits relations in recent years, my business in China is doing quite well. So when I heard the news that some people in America would like to propose continued selling arms and weapons to Taiwan, I begin to get pretty worried. I worry that this may make our cross-straits relations suffer. So I would like to know if, Mr. President, are you supportive of improved cross-straits relations? And although this question is from a businessman, actually, it's a question of keen concern to all of us young Chinese students, so we'd really like to know your position on this question. Thank you.

The President. Thank you. Well, I have been clear in the past that my administration fully supports a "one China" policy, as reflected in the three joint communiques that date back several decades, in terms of our relations with Taiwan as well as our relations with the People's Republic of China. We don't want to change that policy and that approach.

I am very pleased with the reduction of tensions and the improvement in cross-straits relations, and it is my deep desire and hope that we will continue to see great improvement

between Taiwan and the rest of—and the People's Republic in resolving many of these issues.

One of the things that I think that the United States, in terms of its foreign policy and its policy with respect to China, is always seeking is ways that through dialogue and negotiations, problems can be solved. We always think that's the better course. And I think that economic ties and commercial ties that are taking place in this region are helping to lower a lot of the tensions that date back before you were born or even before I was born.

Now, there are some people who still look towards the past when it comes to these issues, as opposed to looking towards the future. I prefer to look towards the future. And as I said, I think the commercial ties that are taking place—there's something about when people think that they can do business and make money that makes them think very clearly and not worry as much about ideology. And I think that that's starting to happen in this region, and we are very supportive of that process. Okay?

Let's see, it's a girl's turn now, right? Yes, right there. Yes. Hold on, let's get a—whoops, I'm sorry, they took the mike back here. I'll call on you next.

Go ahead, and then I'll go up here later. Go ahead. No, no, please.

Nobel Peace Prize

Q. Thank you.

The President. I'll call on you later. But I'll call on her first, and then I'll call on you afterwards. Go ahead.

Q. Okay, thank you. Mr. President, I'm a student from Shanghai Jiao Tong University. I have a question concerning the Nobel Prize for Peace. In your opinion, what's the main reason that you were honored the Nobel Prize for Peace? And will it give you more responsibility and pressure to—more pressure and the responsibility to promote the world peace? And will it bring you—will it influence your ideas while dealing with the international affairs? Thank you very much.

The President. Thank you. That was an excellent question. I have to say that nobody was more surprised than me about winning the Nobel Prize for Peace. Obviously, it's a great honor. I don't believe necessarily that it's an honor I deserve, given the extraordinary history of people who have won the prize. All I can do is to, with great humility, accept the fact that I think the committee was inspired by the American people and the possibilities of changing not only America, but also America's approach to the world. And so in some ways I think they gave me the prize but I was more just a symbol of the shift in our approach to world affairs that we are trying to promote.

In terms of the burden that I feel, I am extraordinarily honored to be put in the position of President. And as my wife always reminds me when I complain that I'm working too hard, she says, "You volunteered for this job." [*Laughter*] And so you—there's a saying—I don't know if there's a similar saying in China—we have a saying: "You made your bed, now you have to sleep in it." And it basically means, you have to be careful what you ask for because you might get it.

I think that all of us have obligations for trying to promote peace in the world. It's not always easy to do. There are still a lot of conflicts in the world that are—date back for centuries. If you look at the Middle East, there are wars and conflict that are rooted in arguments going back a thousand years. In many parts of the world—let's say, in the continent of Africa—there are ethnic and tribal conflicts that are very hard to resolve.

And obviously, right now, as President of the United States, part of my job is to serve as Commander in Chief, and my first priority is to protect the American people. And because of the attacks on 9/11 and the terrorism that has been taking place around the world where innocent people are being killed, it is my obligation to make sure that we root out these terrorist organizations and that we cooperate with other countries in terms of dealing with this kind of violence.

Nevertheless, although I don't think that we can ever completely eliminate violence between nations or between peoples, I think that we can definitely reduce the violence between peoples through dialogue, through the exchange of ideas, through greater understanding between peoples and between cultures.

And particularly now when just one individual can detonate a bomb that causes so much destruction, it is more important than ever that we pursue these strategies for peace. Technology is a powerful instrument for good, but it has also given the possibility for just a few people to cause enormous damage. And that's why I'm hopeful that in my meetings with President Hu and on an ongoing basis, both the United States and China can work together to try to reduce conflicts that are taking place.

We have to do so, though, also keeping in mind that when we use our military, because we're such big and strong countries, that we have to be self-reflective about what we do, that we have to examine our own motives and our own interests to make sure that we are not simply using our military forces because nobody can stop us. That's a burden that great countries, great powers, have, is to act responsibly in the community of nations. And my hope is, is that the United States and China together can help to create an international norms that reduce conflict around the world. Okay?

All right? Jon? I'm going to call on my Ambassador because I think he has a question that was generated through the web site of our Embassy. This was selected, though, by, I think, one of the members of our U.S. press corps so that——

Freedom of Speech/State Censorship of Internet Content

U.S. Ambassador to China Jon M. Huntsman, Jr. That's right. And not surprisingly: In a country with 350 million Internet users and 60 million bloggers, do you know of the firewall? And second: Should we be able to use Twitter freely?—is the question.

The President. Well, first of all, let me say that I have never used Twitter. I notice that young people, they're very busy with all these electronics. My thumbs are too clumsy to type in things on the phone. But I am a big believer in technology, and I'm a big believer in openness when it comes to the flow of information. I think that the more freely information flows, the stronger the society becomes, because then citizens of countries around the world can hold their own governments accountable. They can begin to think for themselves. That generates new ideas. It encourages creativity.

And so I've always been a strong supporter of open Internet use. I'm a big supporter of noncensorship. This is part of the tradition of the United States that I discussed before, and I recognize that different countries have different traditions. I can tell you that in the United States, the fact that we have free Internet—or unrestricted Internet access is a source of strength and, I think, should be encouraged.

Now, I should tell you, I should be honest, as President of the United States, there are times where I wish information didn't flow so freely because then I wouldn't have to listen to people criticizing me all the time. I think people naturally are—when they're in positions of power, sometimes thinks, oh, how could that person say that about me, or that's irresponsible, or—but the truth is that because in the United States information is free, and I have a lot of critics in the United States who can say all kinds of things about me, I actually think that that makes our democracy stronger and it makes me a better leader because it forces me to hear opinions that I don't want to hear. It forces me to examine what I'm doing on a day-to-day basis to see, am I really doing the very best that I could be doing for the people of the United States.

And I think the Internet has become an even more powerful tool for that kind of citizen participation. In fact, one of the reasons that I won the Presidency was because we were able to mobilize young people like yourself to get involved through the Internet. Initially, nobody thought we could win because we didn't have necessarily the most wealthy supporters, we didn't have the most powerful political brokers. But through the Internet, people became excited about our campaign and they started to organize and meet and set up campaign activities and events and rallies. And it really ended up creating the kind of bottom-up movement that allowed us to do very well.

Now, that's not just true in—for government and politics, it's also true for business. You think about a company like Google that only 20 years ago was—less than 20 years ago was the idea of a couple of people not much older than you. It was a science project, and suddenly because of the Internet, they were able to create an industry that has revolutionized commerce all around the world. So if it had not been for the freedom and the openness that the Internet allows, Google wouldn't exist.

So I'm a big supporter of not restricting Internet use, Internet access, other information technologies like Twitter. The more open we are, the more we can communicate. And it also helps to draw the world together.

Think about—when I think about my daughters, Malia and Sasha—one is 11, one is 8—from their room, they can get on the Internet and they can travel to Shanghai. They can go anyplace in the world, and they can learn about anything they want to learn about. And that's just an enormous power that they have. And that helps, I think, promote the kind of understanding that we talked about.

Now, as I said before, there's always a downside to technology. It also means that terrorists are able to organize on the stiInternet in ways that they might not have been able to do before; extremists can mobilize. And so there's some price that you pay for openness, there's no denying that. But I think that the good outweighs the bad so much that it's better to maintain that openness. And that's part of why I'm so glad that the Internet was part of this forum. Okay?

I'm going to take two more questions. And the next one is from a gentleman, I think. Right? Right here, yes. Here's the microphone.

The President's Advice to Youth/Importance of Contributing to Society

Q. First, I would like to say that it is a great honor for me to stand here to ask you the questions. I think I am so lucky and just appreciate that your speech is so clear that I really do not need such kind of headset. [*Laughter*]

And here comes the question. My name is—[*inaudible*]—from Fudan University School of Management. And I would like to ask you the question—is that, now that someone has asked you something about the Nobel Peace Prize, but I will not ask you in the same aspect. I want to ask you in the other aspect that since it is very hard for you to get such kind of an honorable prize, and I wonder and we all wonder that—how you struggled to get it. And what's your university/college education that brings you to get such kind of prizes? And we are very curious about it, and we would like to invite you to share with us your campus education experiences so as to go on the road of success.

The President. Well, first of all, let me tell you that I don't know if there's a curriculum or course of study that leads you to win the Nobel Peace Prize. [*Laughter*] So I can't guarantee that. But I think the recipe for success is the one that you are already following. Obviously, all of you are working very hard; you're studying very hard. You're curious. You're willing to think about new ideas and think for yourself. You know, the people who I meet now that I find most inspiring who are successful, I think, are people who are not only willing to work very hard, but are constantly trying to improve themselves and to think in new ways and not just accept the conventional wisdom.

Obviously, there are many different paths to success, and some of you are going to be going into government service, some of you might want to be teachers or professors, some of you might want to be businesspeople. But I think that whatever field you go into, if you're constantly trying to improve and never satisfied with not having done your best and constantly asking new questions—"Are there things that I could be doing differently? Are there new approaches to problems that nobody has thought of before, whether it's in science or technology or in the arts?"—those are usually the people who I think are able to rise about the rest.

The one last piece of advice, though, that I would have that has been useful for me is the people who I admire the most and are most successful, they're not just thinking only about themselves, but they're also thinking about something larger than themselves. So they want to make a contribution to society. They want to make a contribution to their country, their nation, their city. They are interested in having an impact beyond their own immediate lives.

I think so many of us, we get caught up with wanting to make money for ourselves and have a nice car and have a nice house—and all those things are important—but the people who really make their mark on the world is because they have a bigger ambition. They say, "How can I help feed hungry people?" Or, "How can I help to teach children who don't have an education?" Or, "How can I bring about peaceful resolution of conflicts?" Those are the people, I think, who end up making such a big difference in the world. And I'm sure that young people like you are going to be able to make that kind of difference as long as you keep working the way you've been working. All right?

All right, this is going to be the last question, unfortunately. We've run out of time so quickly. Our last Internet question, because I want to make sure that we got all three of our fine students here.

Terrorism/Military Operations in Afghanistan

Q. So, Mr. President, it's a great honor for the last question. And I'm a college student from Fudan University, and today I'm also the representative of China's youth netizens. And this question, I think, is from Beijing: Paid great attention to your Afghanistan policies, and he would like to know whether terrorism is still the greatest security concern for the United States? And how do you assess the military actions in Afghanistan, or whether it will turn into another Iraqi war? Thank you very much.

The President. I think that's an excellent question. Well, first of all, I do continue to believe that the greatest threat to United States security are the terrorist networks like Al Qaida. And the reason is, is because even though they are small in number, what they have shown is, is that they have no conscience when it comes to the destruction of innocent civilians. And because of technology today, if an organization like that got a weapon of mass destruction on its hands—a nuclear or a chemical or a biological weapon—and they used it in a city, whether it's in Shanghai or New York, just a few individuals could potentially kill tens of thousands of people, maybe hundreds of thousands. So it really does pose an extraordinary threat.

Now, the reason we originally went into Afghanistan was because Al Qaida was in Afghanistan, being hosted by the Taliban. They have now moved over the border of Afghanistan, and they are in Pakistan now, but they continue to have networks with other extremist organizations in that region. And I do believe that it is important for us to stabilize Afghanistan so that the people of Afghanistan can protect themselves, but they can also be a partner in reducing the power of these extremist networks.

Now, obviously, it is a very difficult thing—one of the hardest things about my job is ordering young men and women into the battlefield. I often have to meet with the mothers and fathers of the fallen, those who do not come home. And it is a great weight on me. It gives me a heavy heart.

Fortunately, our Armed Services is—the young men and women who participate, they believe so strongly in their service to their country that they are willing to go. And I think that it is possible, working in a broader coalition with our allies in NATO and others that are contributing, like Australia, to help train the Afghans so that they have a functioning government, that they have their own security forces, and then slowly we can begin to pull our troops out because there's no longer that vacuum that existed after the Taliban left.

But it's a difficult task. It's not easy. And ultimately, I think, in trying to defeat these terrorist extremists, it's important to understand it's not just a military exercise. We also have to think about what motivates young people to become terrorists, why would they become suicide bombers. And although there are, obviously, a lot of different reasons, including, I think, the perversion of religion, in thinking that somehow these kinds of violent acts are appropriate, part of what's happened in places like Pakistan and Afghanistan is these young people have no education, they have no opportunities, and so they see no way for them to move forward in life, and that leads them into thinking that this is their only option.

And so part of what we want to do in Afghanistan is to find ways that we can train teachers and create schools and improve agriculture so that people have a greater sense of hope. That won't change the ideas of a Usama bin Laden who are very ideologically fixed on trying to strike at the West, but it will change the pool of young people who they can recruit from. And that is at least as important, if not more important over time, as whatever military actions that we can take. Okay?

All right, I have had a wonderful time. I am so grateful to all of you. First of all, let me say I'm very impressed with all of your English. Clearly, you've been studying very hard. And having a chance to meet with all of you, I think, has given me great hope for the future of U.S.-China relations.

I hope that many of you have the opportunity to come and travel and visit the United States. You will be welcomed. I think you will find that the American people feel very warmly towards the people of China. And I am very confident that, with young people like yourselves and the young people that I know in the United States, that our two great countries will continue to prosper and help to bring about a more peaceful and secure world.

So thank you very much everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:18 p.m. at the Museum of Science and Technology. In his remarks, he referred to Yang Yuliang, president, Fudan University; Yao Ming, center, National Basketball Association's Houston Rockets; Mayor Han Zheng of Shanghai; and Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng and her husband Konrad Ng. Some participants spoke in Chinese, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on the Release of the 2008 Household Food Security Report
November 16, 2009

As American families prepare to gather for Thanksgiving, we received an unsettling report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture that found that hunger rose significantly last year. This trend was already painfully clear in many communities across our Nation, where food stamp applications are surging and food pantry shelves are emptying.

It is particularly troubling that there were more than 500,000 families in which a child experienced hunger multiple times over the course of the year. Our children's ability to grow, learn, and meet their full potential, and therefore, our future competitiveness as a nation, depends on regular access to healthy meals.

My administration is committed to reversing the trend of rising hunger. The first task is to restore job growth, which will help relieve the economic pressures that make it difficult for parents to put a square meal on the table each day. But we are also taking targeted steps to prevent Americans from experiencing hunger. Earlier this year, we extended help to those hit hardest by this economic downturn by boosting SNAP benefits. And Secretary Vilsack is working hard to make sure eligible families are able to access those benefits as well as the School Lunch and Breakfast Program. In addition, a bill I signed into law last month invests $85 million in new strategies to prevent children from experiencing hunger in the summer.

Hunger is a problem that we can solve together, and I look forward to working with Congress to pass a strong child nutrition bill that will help children get the healthy meals they need to grow and succeed and help keep America competitive in the decades to come.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Hu Jintao of China in Beijing, China
November 17, 2009

President Hu. I am very happy to have talks with you, Mr. President. This is your first state visit to this country. To begin with, please allow me to extend on behalf of the Chinese Government and the Chinese people and in my own name, a warm welcome to you—welcome to China.

Mr. President, you attach importance to China and you have also worked actively to promote the further growth of this relationship. You have underlined that you welcome a strong, prosperous, and successful China that plays a even greater role on the world stage.

I very much appreciate your statements. I'm willing to have a in-depth exchange of views with you, Mr. President, on how to further the China-U.S. relationship and on how to step up our cooperation in regional and international affairs.

Mr. President, as you are our distinguished guest who have traveled from afar, I would like to give the microphone to you first.

President Obama. Well, Mr. President, let me say on behalf of the American people, my delegation, as well as myself, we are very grateful for your hospitality. We have very much enjoyed our visit in China so far. As you indicated, the United States believes that a strong U.S.-China partnership and dialogue is important not only for the well being and prosperity of our two nations, but also of the world.

And I believe that in these conversations today and in the future, we can continue to build on the progress that's been made over the last three decades and that the United States and China can work on a whole range of global issues, including climate change, making sure that we have economic growth and prosperity, and ensuring that together we are bringing about a more peaceful world.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:01 a.m. in the Great Hall of the People. President Hu spoke in Chinese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to an Expanded Meeting With President Hu Jintao of China in Beijing
November 17, 2009

President Hu. Mr. President, I'm very happy to have talks with you. This is your first state visit to China. To begin with, please allow me to extend on behalf of the Chinese Government and of the Chinese people and in my own name, a warm welcome to you, Mr. President, and all the delegates of your delegation.

Just now we already had good talks in the smaller group meeting, and we reached agreement in many important fields. I'm now willing to have a in-depth exchange of views with you, Mr. President, at this expanded meeting on the bilateral relationship and on major regional and international issues.
tinued to move forward in a way that can bring

As you are our distinguished guest from afar, I would like to hand over the microphone to you first.

President Obama. Well, thank you very much once again, Mr. President, for your extraordinary hospitality. I can tell you that both my delegation as well as myself, we have had an excellent visit so far. And I thought that the discussions that we just had in the smaller meeting were very constructive.

As we both affirmed, the United States and China have a great many mutual interests. And after 30 years of bilateral relations, I think it's fair to say that our two Governments have coneven greater cooperation in the future.

And I want to reaffirm the fact that the American people are interested in stronger relations with the people of China, and that the more that we can encourage people-to-people exchanges that are consistent with the discussions that we're having at the Government level, the more that China and the United States will be able to work cooperatively on a whole range of issues, both economic issues, security issues, and global issues that are in the interest not just of our two nations but the entire world.

So once again, thank you for being such an excellent host, and I look forward to the expanded discussion.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:23 a.m. in the Great Hall of the People. President Hu spoke in Chinese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Hu Jintao of China in Beijing
November 17, 2009

President Hu. Your Excellency President Obama and dear friends from the news media, ladies and gentlemen, I'm very happy to meet our friends from the press and media. To begin with, I would like to extend on behalf of the Chinese Government and people a warm welcome to President Obama on his state visit. Welcome to China.

Just now I had very good talks with President Obama. The two sides had a in-depth exchange of views on how to further bilateral relationship and on major regional and international issues of shared interest. The two sides reached broad, important agreement. The talks were candid, constructive, and very fruitful.

Both President Obama and I believe that at present, the international situation continues to undergo profound and complex changes. There are growing global challenges, and countries in today's world have become more and more interdependent. In this context, it is necessary to step up international cooperation.

Against this new backdrop, China and United States share extensive common interests and broad prospect for cooperation on a series of major issues important to mankind's peace and stability and development.

President Obama and I spoke positively of the progress made in the China-U.S. relationship since the new American administration took office. We both agreed to continue to adopt a strategic and long-term perspective, increase the dialogue exchanges and cooperation, and work together to build a positive, cooperative, and comprehensive China-U.S. relationship for the 21st century. We also agreed to take concrete actions to steadily grow a partnership between the two countries to meet our common challenges in order to contribute to world peace, stability, and prosperity.

We both believe and maintain close, high-level exchanges and dialogue and consultations at various other levels are essential to the growth of China relations. The two sides agreed that the leaders of the two countries will continue to stay in close touch through mutual visits, telephone conversations, correspondence, and meetings of multilateral fora.

The two sides spoke positively of the important role of the China-U.S. Strategic and Economic Dialogues mechanism in enhancing the mutual trust and cooperation between the two countries. The two sides will continue to follow through on the outcomes of the first round of the China-U.S. Strategic and Economic Dialogues held in July this year. And we will start as early as possible to make preparations for the second round to be held in summer next year in Beijing.

We also exchanged views on the current international economic and financial situation, and we believed that now the world economy has shown some positive signs of stabilizing and recovery. But the foundation for this recovery is not firmly established. The two sides reiterated that they will continue to increase dialogue and cooperation in macroeconomic and financial policies, and they will continue to have consultations on an equal footing to properly resolve and address the economic and trade frictions in

a joint effort to uphold the sound and steady growth of their business ties and trade. I stressed to President Obama that under the current circumstances, our two countries need to oppose and reject protectionism in all its manifestations in an even stronger stand.

We both positively spoke of the important role of the G–20 summit in tackling the international financial crisis. Our two countries will work with other members and comprehensively follow through on the outcomes of the various summits. We will also work together to continuously strengthen the role of G–20 in global economic governance, advance the reform of international financial system, and improve the global economic governance to ward off and guard against future financial or economic crisis.

We agreed to expand our cooperation on climate change, energy, and environment. We also agreed to act on the basis of the principle of common but the differentiated responsibilities and consistent with our respective capabilities to work with other parties concerned to help produce positive outcomes out of the Copenhagen conference.

The complementing departments of China and the United States have already signed a number of cooperation agreements, including the MOU to enhance cooperation on climate change, energy, and environment. The two sides have also officially launched the initiative of developing a China-U.S. clean energy research center.

Both President Obama and I said that we are willing to act on the basis of a mutual benefit and reciprocity to deepen our cooperation on counterterrorism, law enforcement, science, technology, outer space, civil aviation, and engage in cooperation in space exploration, high-speed railway infrastructure, in agriculture, health, and other fields. And we also agreed to work together to continue to promote even greater progress in the growth of military-to-military ties.

We also discussed how to expand people-to-people and cultural exchanges between the two countries, particularly the youth exchanges. And we are supportive of the establishment of a people-to-people and cultural exchange mechanism, and we agreed to strengthen our cooperation in exchanging students.

Both of us said that we will remain committed to dialogue and consultations in resolving the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue. And such approach serves the common interests of China, the United States, and other parties concerned. The two sides will work with other parties concerned to continue the denuclearization process of the Korean Peninsula and six-party talks process in a bid to uphold the peace and the stability in Northeast Asia.

We both stressed that to uphold the international nuclear nonproliferation regime and to appropriately resolve the Iranian nuclear issue through dialogue and in negotiations is very important to stability in the Middle East and in the gulf region.

During the talks, I underlined to President Obama that given our differences in national conditions, it is only normal that our two sides may disagree on some issues. What is important is to respect and accommodate each other's core interests and major concerns.

President Obama on various occasions has reiterated that the U.S. side adheres to the "one China" policy, abides by the three Sino-U.S. joint communiques, and respects China's sovereignty and the territorial integrity when it comes to the Taiwan question and other matters. The Chinese side appreciates his statements.

The two sides reaffirmed the fundamental principle of respecting each other's sovereignty and the territorial integrity. Neither side supports any attempts by any force to undermine this principle. We will continue to act in the spirit of equality, mutual respect, and a noninterference in each other's internal affairs and engage in dialogue and exchanges on such issues as human rights and religion in order to enhance understanding, reduce differences, and broaden common ground.

Ladies and gentlemen, the China-U.S. relationship is very important. To preserve and promote the growth of this relationship is a shared responsibility for both China and the United States. The Chinese side is willing to work with the U.S. side to ensure the sustained, sound, and steady growth of this

relationship to the greater benefits of peoples of our two countries and people throughout the world.

Thank you all.

Moderator. Now we would like to give the microphone to President Obama.

President Obama. Good afternoon. I want to start by thanking President Hu and the Chinese people for the warmth and hospitality that they have shown myself and our delegation since we arrived. We had a wonderful day in Shanghai yesterday, a wonderful discussion with China's young men and women, and I'm looking forward to the conversations we'll have and the sights that we'll see here in Beijing over the next 2 days.

We meet here at a time when the relationship between the United States and China has never been more important to our collective future. The major challenges of the 21st century, from climate change to nuclear proliferation to economic recovery, are challenges that touch both our nations and challenges that neither of our nations can solve by acting alone.

That's why the United States welcomes China's efforts in playing a greater role on the world stage, a role in which a growing economy is joined by growing responsibilities. And that's why President Hu and I talked about continuing to build a positive, cooperative, and comprehensive relationship between our nations.

As President Hu indicated, we discussed what's required to sustain this economic recovery so that economic growth is followed by the creation of new jobs and a lasting prosperity. So far, China's partnership has proved critical in our effort to pull ourselves out of the worst recession in generations.

Going forward, we agreed to advance the pledge made at the G–20 summit in Pittsburgh and pursue a strategy of more balanced economic growth, a strategy where America saves more, spends less, reduces our long-term debt, and where China makes adjustments across a broad range of policies to rebalance its economy and spur domestic demand. This will lead to increased U.S. exports and jobs on the one hand and higher living standards in China on the other.

As President Hu indicated, we also agreed that maintaining open markets and free flows of commerce in both of our nations will contribute to our shared prosperity. And I was pleased to note the Chinese commitment, made in past statements, to move toward a more market-oriented exchange rate over time. I emphasized in our discussions, and have others in the region, that doing so based on economic fundamentals would make an essential contribution to the global rebalancing effort.

President Hu and I also made progress on the issue of climate change. As the two largest consumers and producers of energy, there can be no solution to this challenge without the efforts of both China and the United States. That's why we've agreed to a series of important new initiatives in this area. As President Hu indicated, we are creating a joint clean energy research center and have achieved agreements on energy efficiency, renewable energy, cleaner uses of coal, electric vehicles, and shale gas.

We also agreed to work toward a successful outcome in Copenhagen. Our aim there, in support of what Prime Minister Rasmussen of Denmark is trying to achieve, is not a partial accord or a political declaration, but rather an accord that covers all of the issues in the negotiations and one that has immediate operational effect. Now, this kind of comprehensive agreement would be an important step forward in the effort to rally the world around a solution to our climate challenge. And we agreed that each of us would take significant mitigation actions and stand behind these commitments.

On the issue of nonproliferation, President Hu and I discussed our shared commitment to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, and I told him how appreciative I am of China's support for the global nonproliferation regime as well as the verifiable elimination of North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

We agreed on the importance of resuming the six-party talks as soon as possible. As I said in Tokyo, North Korea has a choice: It can continue down the path of confrontation and provocation that has led to less security, less prosperity, and more isolation from the global community, or it can choose to become a full member of the international community, which will

give a better life to its people by living up to international obligations and foregoing nuclear weapons.

In the same way, we agreed that the Islamic Republic of Iran must provide assurances to the international community that its nuclear program is peaceful and transparent. On this point, our two nations and the rest of our P–5-plus-1 partners are unified. Iran has an opportunity to present and demonstrate its peaceful intentions, but if it fails to take this opportunity, there will be consequences.

President Hu and I also discussed our mutual interest in security and stability of Afghanistan and Pakistan. And neither country can or should be used as a base for terrorism, and we agreed to cooperate more on meeting this goal, including bringing about more stable, peaceful relations in all of South Asia.

Finally, as I did yesterday in Shanghai, I spoke to President Hu about America's bedrock beliefs that all men and women possess certain fundamental human rights. We do not believe these principles are unique to America, but rather they are universal rights and that they should be available to all peoples, to all ethnic and religious minorities. And our two countries agreed to continue to move this discussion forward in a human rights dialogue that is scheduled for early next year.

As President Hu indicated, the United States respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of China. And once again, we have reaffirmed our strong commitment to a "one China" policy.

We did note that while we recognize that Tibet is part of the People's Republic of China, the United States supports the early resumption of dialogue between the Chinese Government and representatives of the Dalai Lama to resolve any concerns and differences that the two sides may have. We also applauded the steps that the People's Republic of China and Taiwan have already taken to relax tensions and build ties across the Taiwan Strait.

Our own policy, based on the three U.S.-China communiques and the Taiwan Relations Act, supports the further development of these ties, ties that are in the interest of both sides as well as the broader region and the United States.

These are just some of the issues that President Hu and I discussed. But we also know that the relationship between our two nations goes far beyond any single issue. In this young century, the jobs we do, the prosperity we build, the environment we protect, the security that we seek, all these things are shared.

Given that interconnection, I do not believe that one country's success must come at the expense of another. That's why the United States welcomes China as a strong, prosperous, and successful member of the community of nations.

Our relationship going forward will not be without disagreement or difficulty. But because of our cooperation, both the United States and China are more prosperous and secure. We've seen what's possible when we build upon our mutual interests and engage on the basis of equality and mutual respect. And I very much look forward to deepening that engagement and understanding during this trip and in the months and years to come.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:37 p.m. in the Great Hall of the People. In his remarks, he referred to Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama. President Hu spoke in Chinese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Statement by the United States of America and the Republic of China
November 17, 2009

At the invitation of President Hu Jintao of the People's Republic of China, President Barack Obama of the United States of America is paying a state visit to China from November 15–18, 2009. The Presidents held in-depth, productive and candid discussions on U.S.-China relations and other issues of mutual interest. They highlighted the substantial progress in U.S.-China relations over the past 30 years since the establishment of diplomatic ties, and they reached agreement to advance U.S.-China relations in the new era. President

Obama will have separate meetings with Wu Bangguo, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and Premier Wen Jiabao. President Obama also spoke with and answered questions from Chinese youth.

I. The U.S.-China Relationship

The United States and China agreed that regular exchanges between leaders of the two countries are essential to the long-term, sound, and steady growth of U.S.-China relations. The two sides are of the view that the three meetings between the two Presidents and other important bilateral exchanges this year have strengthened relations. President Obama invited President Hu to make a visit to the United States next year, and President Hu accepted the invitation with pleasure. Leaders of the two countries will continue to maintain close communication through mutual visits, meetings, telephone conversations and correspondence.

The United States and China spoke highly of the important role of the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue and recognized that the Dialogue offers a unique forum to promote understanding, expand common ground, reduce differences, and develop solutions to common problems. Both sides believed that the first round of the Dialogue held in Washington, D.C., in July this year was a fruitful one and agreed to honor in good faith the commitments made and hold the second round in Beijing in the summer of 2010. The two sides agreed that they will continue to use the direct communication links among senior leaders to maintain timely communication on major and sensitive issues, institutionalize the annual exchange of visits by the two foreign ministers and encourage senior officials of other departments of the two countries to exchange visits on a regular basis.

The United States and China commended the outcomes of the visit to the United States by General Xu Caihou, vice chairman of the Chinese Central Military Commission, in October this year, and stated that they will take concrete steps to advance sustained and reliable military-to-military relations in the future. The two sides will prepare for the visit to the United States by General Chen Bingde, Chief of the General Staff of China's People's Liberation Army, and the visits to China by Robert Gates, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, and Admiral Michael Mullen, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. The two sides will actively implement various exchange and cooperation programs agreed between the two militaries, including by increasing the level and frequency of exchanges. The goal of these efforts is to improve their capabilities for practical cooperation and foster greater understanding of each other's intentions and of the international security environment.

The United States and China agreed to deepen counter-terrorism consultation and cooperation on an equal and mutually beneficial basis and to strengthen law-enforcement cooperation. They agreed to exchange evidence and intelligence on law enforcement issues in a timely and reciprocal manner. The two countries will undertake joint investigations and provide investigative assistance on cases of mutual interest. The United States and China will strengthen cooperation on criminal investigations and deepen collaboration in combating embezzlement as well as in counter-narcotics and precursor chemical control and in combating unlawful migration. They also will boost joint efforts to combat transnational crime and criminal organizations as well as money laundering and the financing of terrorism including counterfeiting and recovery of illicit funds. They will work to combat smuggling and human trafficking.

The United States reaffirmed its support for Expo 2010 Shanghai.

The United States and China applauded the rich achievements in scientific and technological cooperation and exchanges between the two countries over the past 30 years since the signing of the *U.S.-China Agreement on Cooperation in Science and Technology* and agreed to further upgrade the level of exchanges and cooperation in scientific and technological innovation through the U.S.-China Joint Commission on Science and Technology Cooperation.

The United States and China look forward to expanding discussions on space science cooperation and starting a dialogue on human space flight and space exploration, based on the principles of transparency, reciprocity and mutual

benefit. Both sides welcome reciprocal visits of the NASA Administrator and the appropriate Chinese counterpart in 2010.

The United States and China agreed to strengthen their cooperation on civil aviation, and confirmed their intent to expand the *Memorandum of Agreement for Technical Cooperation in the field of Civil Aviation between the Federal Aviation Administration of the United States of America and the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC).* The two sides welcomed cooperation by public and private bodies on the development of high speed railway infrastructure.

The United States and China undertook to implement the newly signed *Memorandum of Understanding Between the Department of Agriculture of the United States of America and the Ministry of Agriculture of the People's Republic of China on Cooperation in Agriculture and Related Fields.*

The two countries agreed to collaborate further in joint research in the health sector including on stem cells. They will deepen cooperation on global public health issues, including Influenza A (H1N1) prevention, surveillance, reporting and control, and on avian influenza, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. They will also enhance cooperation on food and product safety and quality.

The United States and China underlined that each country and its people have the right to choose their own path, and all countries should respect each other's choice of a development model. Both sides recognized that the United States and China have differences on the issue of human rights. Addressing these differences in the spirit of equality and mutual respect, as well as promoting and protecting human rights consistent with international human rights instruments, the two sides agreed to hold the next round of the official human rights dialogue in Washington D.C. by the end of February 2010. The United States and China agreed that promoting cooperation in the field of law and exchanges on the rule of law serves the interests and needs of the citizens and governments of both countries. The United States and China decided to convene the U.S.-China Legal Experts Dialogue at an early date.

The two countries noted the importance of people-to-people and cultural exchanges in fostering closer U.S.-China bilateral relations and therefore agreed in principle to establish a new bilateral mechanism to facilitate these exchanges. The two sides are pleased to note the continued increase in the number of students studying in each other's country in recent years. Nearly 100,000 Chinese are now studying in the United States, and the U.S. side will receive more Chinese students and facilitate visa issuance for them. The United States has approximately 20,000 students in China. The United States seeks to encourage more Americans to study in China by launching a new initiative to send 100,000 students to China over the coming four years. China welcomed this decision by the United States. The two sides agreed to expedite negotiations to renew in 2010 the *Implementing Accord for Cultural Exchange for the Period Through 2010–2012 under the Cultural Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the People's Republic of China.* The United States and China agreed to jointly hold the Second U.S.-China Cultural Forum in the United States at an appropriate time.

II. Building and Deepening Bilateral Strategic Trust

The United States and China are of the view that in the 21st century, global challenges are growing, countries are more interdependent, and the need for peace, development, and cooperation is increasing. The United States and China have an increasingly broad base of cooperation and share increasingly important common responsibilities on many major issues concerning global stability and prosperity. The two countries should further strengthen coordination and cooperation, work together to tackle challenges, and promote world peace, security and prosperity.

The two countries believe that to nurture and deepen bilateral strategic trust is essential to U.S.-China relations in the new era. During their discussions, the Chinese side said that it

resolutely follows the path of peaceful development and a win-win strategy of opening-up, and is committed to promoting the building of a harmonious world of enduring peace and common prosperity. The United States reiterated that it welcomes a strong, prosperous, and successful China that plays a greater role in world affairs. The United States stated that it is committed to working with other countries in addressing the most difficult international problems they face. China welcomes the United States as an Asia-Pacific nation that contributes to peace, stability, and prosperity in the region. The two sides reiterated that they are committed to building a positive, cooperative, and comprehensive U.S.-China relationship for the 21st century, and will take concrete actions to steadily build a partnership to address common challenges.

The United States and China underscored the importance of the Taiwan issue in U.S.-China relations. China emphasized that the Taiwan issue concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and expressed the hope that the United States will honor its relevant commitments and appreciate and support the Chinese side's position on this issue. The United States stated that it follows its one China policy and abides by the principles of the three U.S.-China joint communiques. The United States welcomes the peaceful development of relations across the Taiwan Strait and looks forward to efforts by both sides to increase dialogues and interactions in economic, political, and other fields, and develop more positive and stable cross-Strait relations.

The two countries reiterated that the fundamental principle of respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity is at the core of the three U.S.-China joint communiques which guide U.S.-China relations. Neither side supports any attempts by any force to undermine this principle. The two sides agreed that respecting each other's core interests is extremely important to ensure steady progress in U.S.-China relations.

The United States and China believe that bilateral cooperation on common global challenges will contribute to a more prosperous and secure world. They reaffirmed their commitment made on 27 June 1998 not to target at each other the strategic nuclear weapons under their respective control. The two sides believed that the two countries have common interests in promoting the peaceful use of outer space and agree to take steps to enhance security in outer space. The two sides agreed to discuss issues of strategic importance through such channels as the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue and military-to-military exchanges.

The United States and China agreed to handle through existing channels of consultations and dialogue military security and maritime issues in keeping with norms of international law and on the basis of respecting each other's jurisdiction and interests.

III. Economic Cooperation and Global Recovery

The two sides are determined to work together to achieve more sustainable and balanced global economic growth. To that end, the two sides noted that their forceful and timely policy responses helped stem the decline in global output and stabilized financial markets. The two sides agreed to sustain measures to ensure a strong and durable global economic recovery and financial system. The two sides reiterated that they will continue to strengthen dialogue and cooperation on macro-economic policies. The two sides pledge to honor all commitments made at the inaugural meeting of the Strategic and Economic Dialogue, the G–20 summits, and APEC in Singapore.

The two sides commended the important role of the three G–20 summits in tackling the global financial crisis, and committed to work with other members of the G–20 to enhance the G–20's effectiveness as the premier forum for international economic cooperation. The two sides agreed to work together, including through a cooperative process on mutual assessment to make the G–20 Framework for Strong, Sustainable and Balanced Growth a success. The two sides welcomed recent agreements by the G–20 to ensure that the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) have sufficient resources and to reform their governance structures in order to improve IFIs credibility, legitimacy and effectiveness. The two sides stressed

the need to follow through on the quantified targets for the reform of quota and voting shares of IFIs as soon as possible, increasing the voice and representation of emerging markets and developing countries in these institutions consistent with the Pittsburgh Summit Leaders Statement. They also agreed to work together to strengthen the capacity of these institutions to prevent and respond to future crises.

The two sides will further enhance communication and the exchange of information regarding macro-economic policy, and work together to pursue policies of adjusting domestic demand and relative prices to lead to more sustainable and balanced trade and growth. China will continue to implement the policies to adjust economic structure, raise household incomes, expand domestic demand to increase contribution of consumption to GDP growth and reform its social security system. The United States will take measures to increase national saving as a share of GDP and promote sustainable non-inflationary growth. To achieve this, the United States is committed to returning the Federal budget deficit to a sustainable path and pursuing measures to encourage private saving. Both sides will also pursue forward-looking monetary policies with due regard for the ramifications of those policies for the international economy.

The two sides recognize the importance of open trade and investment to their domestic economies and to the global economy, and are committed to jointly fight protectionism in all its manifestations. The two sides agreed to work proactively to resolve bilateral trade and investment disputes in a constructive, cooperative, and mutually beneficial manner. Both sides will expedite negotiation on a bilateral investment treaty. The two sides are committed to seeking a positive, ambitious, and balanced conclusion to the Doha Development Agenda in 2010.

The two sides spoke highly of the outcomes of the 20th Meeting of the U.S.-China Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade. The two sides reaffirmed the commitment at this JCCT meeting and look forward to their full implementation.

IV. Regional and Global Challenges

The two sides noted that, at a time when the international environment is undergoing complex and profound changes, the United States and China share a responsibility to cooperatively address regional and global security challenges. The two sides stressed that they share broad common interests in the Asia-Pacific region and support the development and improvement of an open and inclusive regional cooperation framework that is beneficial to all. The two sides will work to encourage APEC to play a more effective role in promoting regional trade and investment liberalization and economic and technical cooperation and for the ASEAN Regional Forum to play a more effective role in strengthening regional security cooperation.

The two sides agreed that respect for the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, IAEA mandates, and implementation of all relevant UN Security Council resolutions are essential for the success of our joint efforts to stem the spread of nuclear weapons. The two presidents recalled their participation at the September 24, 2009, UN Security Council Summit on nuclear nonproliferation and nuclear disarmament. They welcomed the outcome of the Summit and expressed their strong support for UN Security Resolution 1887.

The two sides reaffirmed the importance of continuing the Six-Party Talks process and implementing the September 19, 2005, Joint Statement, including denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, normalization of relations and establishment of a permanent peace regime in Northeast Asia. The two sides stated that they will work together with other parties concerned to comprehensively achieve the purpose and overall goal of the Six-Party Talks through consultations and dialogues. The Chinese side welcomed the start of high-level contacts between the United States and the DPRK. The two sides expressed the hope that the multilateral mechanism of the Six-Party Talks would convene at an early date.

The two sides noted with concern the latest developments with regard to the Iranian

nuclear issue. The two sides agreed that Iran has the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy under the NPT and it should fulfill its due international obligations under that treaty. They welcomed the talks in Geneva on October 1st between the P5+1 and Iran as a promising start towards addressing international concerns about Iran's nuclear program, and expressed their readiness to continue that engagement as soon as possible. The two sides emphasized that all efforts should be made to take confidence building steps and called on Iran to respond positively to the proposal of the IAEA Director General. The two sides reaffirmed their strong support for a comprehensive and long-term solution to the Iranian nuclear issue through negotiations, and called on Iran to engage constructively with the P5+1 and to cooperate fully with the IAEA to facilitate a satisfactory outcome.

The two sides welcomed all efforts conducive to peace, stability and development in South Asia. They support the efforts of Afghanistan and Pakistan to fight terrorism, maintain domestic stability and achieve sustainable economic and social development, and support the improvement and growth of relations between India and Pakistan. The two sides are ready to strengthen communication, dialogue and cooperation on issues related to South Asia and work together to promote peace, stability and development in that region.

The two sides underlined their commitment to the eventual realization of a world free of nuclear weapons. They reiterated their opposition to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and will jointly uphold the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. They agreed to enhance non-proliferation cooperation on the basis of mutual respect and equality. They will work together to achieve a successful Review Conference of Parties to the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* in 2010. They committed to pursue ratification of the *Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty* as soon as possible, and will work together for the early entry into force of the CTBT. They support the launching of negotiations on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty at an early date in the Conference on Disarmament, and stand ready to strengthen communication and cooperation in nuclear safety and security and in combating nuclear terrorism. China attaches importance to the U.S. initiative to hold a nuclear security summit in April 2010 and will actively participate in the preparations for the summit.

The two sides also discussed the importance of UN peacekeeping operations in promoting international peace and security.

The two sides agreed to enhance dialogue on development issues to explore areas of cooperation and coordination and to ensure that both countries' efforts are conducive to achieving sustainable outcomes.

V. Climate Change, Energy and Environment

The two sides held a constructive and productive dialogue on the issue of climate change. They underscored that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time. The two sides maintain that a vigorous response is necessary and that international cooperation is indispensable in responding to this challenge. They are convinced of the need to address climate change in a manner that respects the priority of economic and social development in developing countries and are equally convinced that transitioning to a low-carbon economy is an opportunity to promote continued economic growth and sustainable development in all countries.

Regarding the upcoming Copenhagen Conference, both sides agree on the importance of actively furthering the full, effective and sustained implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in accordance with the Bali Action Plan. The United States and China, consistent with their national circumstances, resolve to take significant mitigation actions and recognize the important role that their countries play in promoting a sustainable outcome that will strengthen the world's ability to combat climate change. The two sides resolve to stand behind these commitments.

In this context both sides believe that, while striving for final legal agreement, an agreed outcome at Copenhagen should, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, include emission reduction targets of developed countries

and nationally appropriate mitigation actions of developing countries. The outcome should also substantially scale up financial assistance to developing countries, promote technology development, dissemination and transfer, pay particular attention to the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable to adapt to climate change, promote steps to preserve and enhance forests, and provide for full transparency with respect to the implementation of mitigation measures and provision of financial, technology and capacity building support.

The two sides are committed to working together and with other countries in the weeks ahead for a successful outcome at Copenhagen.

The two sides agreed that the transition to a green and low-carbon economy is essential and that the clean energy industry will provide vast opportunities for citizens of both countries in the years ahead and welcomed significant steps forward to advance policy dialogue and practical cooperation on climate change, energy and the environment, building on the U.S.-China Memorandum of Understanding to Enhance Cooperation on Climate Change, Energy and Environment announced at the first round of U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue this July and formally signed during the Presidential visit.

The two sides recognized the importance of the *Ten Year Framework on Energy and Environment Cooperation* (TYF) and commit to strengthen cooperation in promoting clean air, water, transportation, electricity, and resource conservation. Through a new *U.S.-China Energy Efficiency Action Plan* under the TYF, the United States and China will work together to achieve cost-effective energy efficiency improvements in industry, buildings and consumer products through technical cooperation, demonstration and policy exchanges. Noting both countries significant investments in energy efficiency, the two Presidents underscored the enormous opportunities to create jobs and enhance economic growth through energy savings.

The two sides welcomed the signing of the *Protocol Between the Department of Energy of the United States of America and the Ministry of Science and Technology and the National Energy Administration of the People's Republic of China on a Clean Energy Research Center.* The Center will facilitate joint research and development on clean energy by teams of scientists and engineers from both countries, as well as serve as clearing house to help researchers in each country, with public and private funding of at least $150 million over five years split evenly between the two countries. The Center will have one headquarters in each country. Priority topics to be addressed will include energy efficiency in buildings, clean coal (including carbon capture and sequestration), and clean vehicles.

The two sides welcomed the launch of a *U.S.-China Electric Vehicles Initiative* designed to put millions of electric vehicles on the roads of both countries in the years ahead. Building on significant investments in electric vehicles in both the United States and China, the two governments announced a program of joint demonstration projects in more than a dozen cities, along with work to develop common technical standards to facilitate rapid scale-up of the industry. The two sides agreed that their countries share a strong common interest in the rapid deployment of clean vehicles.

The two sides strongly welcomed work in both countries to promote 21st-century coal technologies. They agreed to promote cooperation on large-scale carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) demonstration projects and to begin work immediately on the development, deployment, diffusion, and transfer of CCS technology. The two sides welcomed recent agreements between Chinese and U.S. companies, universities, and research institutions to cooperate on CCS and more efficient coal technologies.

The two sides welcomed the signing of the *Memorandum of Cooperation between the Environmental Protection Agency of the United States and the National Development and Reform Commission of China and to Build Capacity to Address Climate Change.*

The two sides welcomed the launch of *The U.S.-China Renewable Energy Partnership.* Through this Partnership, the two countries

will chart a pathway to wide-scale deployment of wind, solar, advanced bio-fuels, and a modern electric power grid in both countries and cooperate in designing and implementing the policy and technical tools necessary to make that vision possible. Given the combined market size of the two countries, accelerated deployment of renewable energy in the United States and China can significantly reduce the cost of these technologies globally.

The two sides welcomed the establishment of *The U.S.-China Energy Cooperation Program* (ECP), a partnership between government and industry to enhance energy security and combat climate change. The ECP will leverage private sector resources and expertise to accelerate the deployment of clean energy technology.

The two sides commended the results of the recently-held *Fourth U.S.-China Energy Policy Dialogue* and *Ninth U.S.-China Oil and Gas Industry Forum* and welcomed the launch of a *U.S.-China Shale Gas Resource Initiative* to accelerate the development of unconventional natural gas resources in China. Drawing on recent experience in the United States, this initiative aims to improve energy security in both countries and help China transition to a low-carbon economy.

The two sides agreed to work together to advance global efforts to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy. They welcomed the recently-concluded *Third Executive Committee Meeting of the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership,* and the commitment of the partnership to explore ways to enhance the international framework for civil nuclear energy cooperation. They agreed to consult with one another in order to explore such approaches—including assurance of fuel supply and cradle-to-grave nuclear fuel management so that countries can access peaceful nuclear power while minimizing the risks of proliferation.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Joint Statement by the United States of America and the Republic of China on Clean Energy

November 17, 2009

Today, President Barack Obama and President Hu Jintao announced a far-reaching package of measures to strengthen cooperation between the United States and China on clean energy. Attached are six fact sheets on the U.S.-China clean energy announcements.

1. *U.S.-China Clean Energy Research Center*. The two Presidents announced the establishment of the U.S.-China Clean Energy Research Center. The Center will facilitate joint research and development of clean energy technologies by teams of scientists and engineers from the United States and China, as well as serve as a clearinghouse to help researchers in each country. The Center will be supported by public and private funding of at least $150 million over five years, split evenly between the two countries. Initial research priorities will be building energy efficiency, clean coal including carbon capture and storage, and clean vehicles. The Protocol formally establishing the Center was signed in Beijing by U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu, Chinese Minister of Science and Technology Wan Gang, and Chinese National Energy Agency Acting Administrator Zhang Guobao.

2. *U.S.-China Electric Vehicles Initiative*. The two Presidents announced the launch of the U.S.-China Electric Vehicles Initiative. Building on the first-ever U.S.-China Electric Vehicle Forum in September 2009, the initiative will include joint standards development, demonstration projects in more than a dozen cities, technical roadmapping and public education projects. The two leaders emphasized their countries' strong shared interest in accelerating the deployment of electric vehicles in order to reduce oil dependence, cut greenhouse gas emissions and promote economic growth.

3. *U.S.-China Energy Efficiency Action Plan*. The two Presidents announced the launch of a new U.S.-China Energy Efficiency Action Plan.

Under the new plan, the two countries will work together to improve the energy efficiency of buildings, industrial facilities, and consumer appliances. U.S. and Chinese officials will work together and with the private sector to develop energy efficient building codes and rating systems, benchmark industrial energy efficiency, train building inspectors and energy efficiency auditors for industrial facilities, harmonize test procedures and performance metrics for energy efficient consumer products, exchange best practices in energy efficient labeling systems, and convene a new U.S.-China Energy Efficiency Forum to be held annually, rotating between the two countries.

4. *U.S.-China Renewable Energy Partnership*. The two Presidents announced the launch of a new U.S.-China Renewable Energy Partnership. Under the Partnership, the two countries will develop roadmaps for widespread renewable energy deployment in both countries. The Partnership will also provide technical and analytical resources to states and regions in both countries to support renewable energy deployment and will facilitate state-to-state and region-to-region partnerships to share experience and best practices. A new Advanced Grid Working Group will bring together U.S. and Chinese policymakers, regulators, industry leaders, and civil society to develop strategies for grid modernization in both countries. A new U.S.-China Renewable Energy Forum will be held annually, rotating between the two countries.

5. *21st-Century Coal*. The two Presidents pledged to promote cooperation on cleaner uses of coal, including large-scale carbon capture and storage (CCS) demonstration projects. Through the new U.S.-China Clean Energy Research Center, the two countries are launching a program of technical cooperation to bring teams of U.S. and Chinese scientists and engineers together in developing clean coal and CCS technologies. The two governments are also actively engaging industry, academia, and civil society in advancing clean coal and CCS solutions. The Presidents welcomed: (i) a grant from the U.S. Trade and Development Agency to the China Power Engineering and Consulting Group Corporation to support a feasibility study for an integrated gasification combined cycle (IGCC) power plant in China using American technology; (ii) an agreement by Missouri-based Peabody Energy to invest, participate in GreenGen, a project of several major Chinese energy companies to develop a near-zero emissions coal-fired power plant; (iii) an agreement between GE and Shenhua Corporation to collaborate on the development and deployment of IGCC and other clean coal technologies; and (iv) an agreement between AES and Songzao Coal and Electric Company to use methane captured from a coal mine in Chongqing, China, to generate electricity and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

6. *Shale Gas Initiative*. The two Presidents announced the launch of a new U.S.-China Shale Gas Resource Initiative. Under the Initiative, the U.S. and China will use experience gained in the United States to assess China's shale gas potential, promote environmentally-sustainable development of shale gas resources, conduct joint technical studies to accelerate development of shale gas resources in China, and promote shale gas investment in China through the U.S.-China Oil and Gas Industry Forum, study tours, and workshops.

7. *U.S.-China Energy Cooperation Program*. The two Presidents announced the establishment of the U.S.-China Energy Cooperation Program. The program will leverage private sector resources for project development work in China across a broad array of clean energy projects, to the benefit of both nations. More than 22 companies are founding members of the program. The ECP will include collaborative projects on renewable energy, smart grid, clean transportation, green building, clean coal, combined heat and power, and energy efficiency.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks During a Meeting With Premier Wen Jiabao of China in Beijing
November 18, 2009

Well, Mr. Premier, I want to thank you very much for your hospitality and this meeting. And I want to send my regards not only from my delegation but also from the American people.

Now, I can tell you that those members of my Government who have had dealings with you before have always come away impressed with your knowledge and your wisdom.

We have had very productive discussions over the last 2 days. I think President Hu and myself agreed in our first meeting that we wanted to try to deepen the strategic partnership and relationship between the United States and China. A relationship that used to be focused just on economic and trade issues is now expanding to deal with a whole host of global issues in which U.S.-China cooperation is critical.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:49 a.m. at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse. In his remarks, he referred to President Hu Jintao of China. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Senate Action on Health Care Reform Legislation
November 18, 2009

Today we passed another critical milestone in the health reform effort with the release of the "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act." I was particularly pleased to see that the Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the bill will reduce the deficit by $127 billion over the next 10 years and as much as $650 billion in the decade following, saving hundreds of billions while extending coverage to 31 million more Americans.

From day one, our goal has been to enact legislation that offers stability and security to those who have insurance and affordable coverage to those who don't, and that lowers costs for families, businesses, and governments across the country. Majority Leader Reid, Chairmen Baucus and Dodd, and countless Senators have worked tirelessly to craft legislation that meets those principles.

Just yesterday a bipartisan group of more than 20 leading health economists released a letter urging passage of meaningful reform and praising four key provisions that are in the Senate legislation: a fee on insurance companies offering high-premium plans; the establishment of an independent Medicare commission; reforms to the health care delivery system; and overall deficit neutrality. The economists said that these provisions "will reduce long-term deficits, improve the quality of care, and put the Nation on a firm fiscal footing." Those are precisely the goals we should be seeking to attain.

The challenges facing our health care system aren't new, but if we fail to act, they'll surely get even worse, meaning higher premiums, skyrocketing costs, and deeper instability for those with coverage. Today, thanks to the Senate's hard work, we're closer than ever to enacting solutions to these problems. I look forward to working with the Senate and House to get a finished bill to my desk as soon as possible.

Interview With Xiang Xi of the Southern Weekly in Beijing
November 18, 2009

The President's Visit to China

Mr. Xiang. Your first trip to China is ending. So can you use just one sentence to tell us your favorite about the trip?

The President. It has been a very productive trip. We have worked on a range of issues of mutual concern to the United States and China, and I think it signifies the continued growth of

the relationship that is so important not only to our two peoples but also to the world.

Basketball

Mr. Xiang. I know you love basketball. So do you think you have time to play basketball while you're being President?

The President. You know, I do play, not as often as I used to, but I still play maybe once every week or two. And I enjoy going to games as well. I wish I could have gone to see the Shanghai Sharks, but it wasn't in my schedule. And I'm looking forward to meeting Yao Ming, who is one of my favorite players.

China-U.S. Relations

Mr. Xiang. Two thousand and nine is 30 years anniversary of China and U.S. diplomacy. On the press reception, you said you welcome China to be a strong, prosperous country, playing a more important role on international affairs. And in the two countries' joint declaration, China also welcomed America to play an important role as a Asia Pacific country. So how do you see the China-America cooperation in Asia Pacific area?

The President. Well, first of all, I think it's obvious that China's emergence as a major economic power in the world has been one of the most important things to happen over the last two decades. And part of the reason that China has been able to grow so rapidly is because of strong trade ties between the United States and China.

More importantly, we're seeing our relationship move beyond just issues of trade and economics. We're now consulting with each other on critical issues like climate change that can't be solved unless the United States and China participate.

And so increasingly, I think, what you'll see is a broad strategic relationship between the two countries in which not only are we seeking to cooperate on key economic issues that can increase prosperity for both peoples, but that we're also working closely together on everything from climate change to nonproliferation to dealing with issues of terrorism to making sure that we're addressing critical issues like global poverty and food security.

And I welcome China's role in the world—on the world stage. As it has more resources and more confidence, it's able to take on more and more responsibilities. And we look forward to being an effective partner with China.

China's Market Economy Status

Mr. Xiang. My fourth question is, America has not recognized China's market economic status, so what effort you give to this question?

The President. Well, keep in mind that China's nonmarket status under the WTO only applies to a few segments of the economy. Most of China's economic sectors are treated as part of the market economy. That's why trade with the United States is so robust. And my understanding is, is that the Chinese Government is taking steps necessary in order for it to achieve a market status by 2015, and certainly, we are interested in working with China for such a result.

Mr. Xiang. Do you have to schedule, to work on to recognize China's market economy status?

The President. Well, this is an issue that involves a lot of technical economic questions. And so what we have done through our strategic and economic dialogue is to create a framework where we can work through many of these detailed issues at a technical level. Hopefully they can be resolved.

Trade

Mr. Xiang. We notice China and America has a large content of trade, but America has many restrictions against China on high-technology exportation. Both China and America's companies are not very satisfied on this. So it also restricts the two countries' trade balance. How do you comment on this?

The President. Well, first of all, I think it's just important to recognize obviously that the United States has the most open markets in the world. That's why China is able to accumulate such significant trade surpluses with the United States. The issue of high-tech exports,

though, is something that we are reviewing. I discussed this with President Hu. We do think there are opportunities for U.S. exporters to export high-tech technology or to export high technology to China. And some of these restrictions may be outdated, so we're going to be doing a comprehensive review.

One of the main goals, I think, in the G–20 summit in Pittsburgh was to agree that we need a more balanced growth pattern in which China is increasing domestic demand and other surplus countries are increasing domestic demand and the United States is saving more and exporting more. That, I think, will help to stabilize the world financial system as well as help create higher standards of living here in China and more jobs in the United States. And so this could be part of a broader approach that we need to take, and that includes looking at trade provisions; it includes what our currency policies are. All these things go into this broader goal of more balanced growth.

China-U.S. Relations

Mr. Xiang. You talked twice, in Tokyo and Shanghai, that America not trying to contain China's rise. So how do you plan to carry out this policy? How do you do it?

The President. Well, I think through the kinds of ongoing discussions and dialogue that we're currently having with China. It is in the United States interests to have a stable and prosperous China that helps to anchor a stable and prosperous Asia in the same way that Japan's stability, South Korea's stability creates a more peaceful world and greater commercial ties with the United States. The same is true in respect to our policy towards China.

I think that the only thing that could prevent such a positive outcome is if there are misunderstandings and miscalculations between the two sides. And that's why it's so important for us to have these continuous dialogues, both on the economic set of issues but also on security issues. And the more trust that's been established between the two countries, the less likely such misunderstandings could occur.

Mr. Xiang. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The interview began at approximately 11:12 a.m. at the St. Regis Hotel. In his remarks, the President referred to Yao Ming, center, National Basketball Association's Houston Rockets; and President Hu Jintao of China. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 19. Audio was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea in Seoul, South Korea
November 19, 2009

President Obama. Well, Mr. President—I was telling the President, and I think the delegation would agree, that this was the most spectacular ceremony for a state visit that we've been involved with since we've traveled. And I was saying that I especially enjoyed the traditional dress of some of the soldiers.

President Lee. But traditional uniforms are quite difficult to fight in. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. That's true, that's true.

President Lee. Well, first of all, Mr. President, welcome. And you're bringing very nice weather with you, because up until yesterday it was subzeros, frigid cold. [*Laughter*]

Well, once again, Mr. President, welcome to the Asian region, and of course, welcome to Korea. I know that your visit to Japan and China has been very successful. And, Mr. President, as we all like to say, you saved the best for last. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. Well, Mr. President, let me just say that we have been so gratified by the warmth with which we've been received here in the Republic of Korea. And I think there's every indication that the alliance between our two countries has never been stronger.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. at the Blue House. President Lee spoke in Korean,

and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 20. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at Osan Air Base, South Korea
November 19, 2009

The President. Hello, Osan! It is good to be here! Thank you so much.

First of all, please give Staff Sergeant Randy Gray a big round of applause for the outstanding introduction. I want to thank Randy for his service as one of the best warriors in the United States Army. Randy is a reminder that our noncommissioned officers are the strength of America's military. So thanks to Randy and to all the NCOs.

Thank you, Lieutenant Colonel Glover, for the invocation. And please give a big round of applause to Katherine Dennison for singing our national anthem. To the 8th Army Band—where you guys at?

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. There they are, up there. You look fantastic. To all the airmen and soldiers behind me—you guys make a pretty good photo op. [*Laughter*] We are grateful for your service.

I want to thank your local leaders at Osan for welcoming me here today, including Brigadier General Michael Keltz and Colonel Tom "Big" Deale. Your great senior enlisted leaders, including Command Sergeant Major Robert Winzenried and Chief Master Sergeant Michael Williams.

We are joined by America's outstanding representatives here in the Republic of Korea. I want you guys to give it up for Ambassador Kathleen Stephens and General "Skip" Sharp. Give them a big round of applause. There is a wonderful story that I just heard—that the day Skip Sharp was born in West Virginia, his dad was here serving in the Korean war. And that just says something about the extraordinary tradition of your family and service to our country, and we salute you for that. We are grateful to you. Thank you so much.

Listen, it is great to be here at Osan Air Base. We've got the 51st Fighter Wing. We've got the 7th Air Force and Air Forces Korea. But I know we have folks from all across U.S. Forces Korea. We've got the 8th Army and Army Forces Korea. We've got the Naval Forces Korea. We've got Marine Forces Korea—Special Operations Command. And we've got a whole lot of DOD civilians too.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back.

Now, Joanne Sharp and Michelle Remington were there to greet me, and I see that we've got a whole lot of spouses and family here. To you and all the spouses back home, I just want to remind you that you serve and sacrifice too, and America honors you as well.

And we are joined by our great allies: chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Lee and Mrs. Hwang. We are so nice—so grateful that you are here. Thank you. Members of the Republic of Korea Armed Forces, and to all our KATUSA partners—your English is better than my Korean—[*laughter*]—but let me say, *katchi kapshida*. For those of you guys who have not been doing your homework while you're in Korea, that means: We go together.

And to your neighbors, the people of Osan and this country, for more than a half a century, your steadfast resolve has earned you the respect of the world. And your hospitality to Americans serving far from home has earned you the gratitude of the United States. On behalf of us all, thank you to the people of the Republic of Korea.

Now, today I'm finishing my first visit to Asia as President. In Tokyo, we renewed and deepened the U.S.-Japan alliance. In Singapore, we worked with leaders from across the Asia Pacific to strengthen the global economic recovery. And in China, we worked to advance the partnership between our two countries on global issues, because cooperation between the United States and China will mean a safer, more prosperous world for all of us, including right here on the Korean Peninsula.

In Seoul, President Lee and I reaffirmed the enduring alliance between our countries, an alliance rooted in shared sacrifice, common values, mutual interest, and mutual respect. And as we look to the future with a shared vision of our alliance for the 21st century, I made it clear: America's commitment to the defense of the Republic of Korea will never waver, and our alliance has never been stronger.

And I want to deliver, actually, just a quick story, go a little off script. President Lee talked to me about what it was like when he was a young child here in Korea, this country having been torn by war and the poverty that still existed in the country. And he said: "I hope the American people understand how grateful we are for what you've done, because we would not be the extraordinarily strong, prosperous nation that we are, had it not been for the sacrifices of your Armed Services and the continued contributions that you've made."

And I thought, when the President of a country that's become so successful says that America, and America's Armed Services in particular, had something to do with the extraordinary success of their country—he said, "That's something you should take great pride in." And I want all of you to know that, because you are carrying that tradition on right here at Osan.

I couldn't come to the Republic of Korea without coming to see you to deliver a simple message, a message of thanks to you and your families. Because of all the privileges of serving as President, I have no greater honor than serving as Commander in Chief of the finest military that the world has ever known.

At every step of my journey, one truth is clear: The security that allows families to live in peace in Asia and America, the prosperity that allows people to pursue their dreams, the freedoms and liberties that we cherish, they're not accidents of history, they are the direct result of the work that you do, the strong alliances that we have. That's the legacy that you are carrying forward. It is no exaggeration to say that the progress we've seen not just in Korea but in this part of the world would not have been possible without the security and stability provided by generations of American men and women in uniform. It has transformed the lives of millions of people.

Many people have to wait a lifetime to see the difference they've made. But you see the legacy of your service, and you only have to look around. Like generations before you, you've helped keep the peace on this peninsula, working with the wonderful people of the Republic of Korea as they forged a vibrant democracy, and an example that the world admires, of progress and tradition going hand in hand.

Backed by our alliance, this is one of the world's most dynamic economies—and one of America's largest trading partners—bringing prosperity and opportunity to both our people. That's the legacy of our Armed Services.

Backed by our alliance, the Republic of Korea has taken on a leadership role, promoting security and stability around the world—in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in the waters off the Horn of Africa, and here in Asia—helping to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction. That makes us all more secure. That too is part of your legacy.

But the story of your service goes beyond this peninsula, for you are members of a generation that has earned your place among the greatest in American history. You volunteered in a time of war, knowing that you could be sent into harm's way. Many of you served in Iraq. You've given people a chance of self-government there. Others among you served in Afghanistan. And you've denied a safe haven to those who attacked us eight Septembers ago, and would do so again if given the opportunity. Others among you will deploy yet again.

So you and your families have served tour after tour, year after year. And while you've made sacrifices that few Americans will ever truly understand, I want to assure you, every American appreciates what you do. I say today on behalf of the American people: We thank you for your service; we honor you for your sacrifices. And just as you've fulfilled your responsibilities to your Nation, your Nation will fulfill its responsibilities to you.

So as Commander in Chief, here's the commitment I make. We'll make sure you can meet the missions we ask you to go on. That's why we're increasing the defense budget, to keep

you the best trained, best led, best equipped military in the world.

We've increased the size of the Army and Marines Corps ahead of schedule. We've approved a temporary increase in the Army. And we've halted reductions in the Navy and the Air Force, which will give you more time home between deployments. And it will help us to put an end, once and for all, for stop-loss for those who've done their duty.

We'll spend our defense dollars wisely. So we're cutting tens of billions of dollars in waste and unnecessary projects that even the Pentagon says it doesn't need, so that we can spend that money on building the 21st-century military that we do need so we can maintain our military superiority.

And I promise you this: I will not hesitate to use force to protect the American people or our vital interests, but I will also not risk your lives unless it is absolutely necessary. And if it is—[*applause*]—and when it is necessary, America will back you up to the hilt. We'll give you the strategy, the clear mission, the equipment, and the support you need to get the job done. That's the promise I make to you.

As you fulfill your duties, we're going to take care of your families. That's why we're increasing pay. That's what's called an applause line in the business. [*Laughter*] That's why we're increasing childcare. That's why we're increasing support to help spouses and families deal with the stress and separation of war. And I want to commend General Sharp for working to normalize your tours, so more of your families can join you here in Korea. And everywhere I go, from what I've heard, there's an extraordinary quality of life here for our troops. The fact that we can extend these tours a little bit longer just provides more stability and security for your families.

Finally, we pledge to be there when you come home. I mean, it's nice here, but we want you coming home. We're improving care for our wounded warriors, especially those with posttraumatic stress and traumatic brain injury. We're funding the post-9/11 GI bill to give you and your families the chance to pursue your dreams. We've made the biggest commitment to our veterans through the largest percentage increase requested for the VA's budget in more than 30 years.

So these are the commitments I make to you, because you've always taken care of America, and America needs to take care of you. For you are the latest chapter in a long story of proud service, a story told in quiet places of reflection and tribute, including a memorial on the National Mall in Washington, not far from the White House.

There, between the monument to Washington and the memorial to Lincoln, you can find it. Nineteen statues, a squad on patrol as they might have appeared on this peninsula six decades ago, their packs on their backs, clad in their helmets and ponchos, carrying their rifles and radios—every service: Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines; every race: White, Black, Brown—standing together, serving together, moving on, pushing ahead. And etched into the black granite wall beside them, thousands of faces: the nurses, the mechanics, the support personnel who served alongside them.

There, at the Korean War Veterans Memorial, beside the tranquil waters and—that help us remember, are the statistics of their sacrifice: the wounded, the captured, the missing, the dead from that war. And under a bright American flag, etched in stone, are timeless words we know to be true: that freedom is not free.

Freedom is not free. And it is paid in the service and the sacrifice of all who wear America's uniform. It was paid by their generation, from the Pusan Perimeter to the landings at Inchon, from the skies of MiG Alley to the heroism of Heartbreak Ridge. It's been paid by every generation since. And it's being paid by you, in service that inspires us all. And for this, your country—and generations yet unborn—will be forever grateful.

So God bless you all. God bless the Armed Services, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:40 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to S. Sgt. Randy Gray, Jr., USA, signal intelligence analyst, A Co., 1st Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 1st Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 2d Infantry Division,

South Korea, who was one of the 8th U.S. Army's 2009 Best Warrior Competition winners; Col. Bruce Glover, USAF, chaplain, Col. Thomas H. Deale, USAF, commander, and CMSgt. Michael M. Williams, USAF, command chief master sergeant, 51st Fighter Wing; Brig. Gen. Michael A. Keltz, USAF, vice commander, 7th Air Force, Air Forces Korea, and chief of staff, Air Component Command, Osan Air Base; CSM Robert A. Winzenried, USA, command sergeant major, U.S. Forces Korea, Combined Forces Command, and 8th U.S. Army; Gen. Walter L. "Skip" Sharp, USA, commander, United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, and U.S. Forces Korea, and his wife Joanne; Gen. Lee Sang-eui, chairman, Republic of Korea Joint Chiefs of Staff; and President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 20.

The President's Weekly Address
November 21, 2009

Hi. I'm recording this message from Seoul, South Korea, as I finish up my first Presidential trip to Asia. As we emerge from the worst recession in generations, there is nothing more important than to do everything we can to get our economy moving again and put Americans back to work, and I will go anywhere to pursue that goal.

That's one of the main reasons I took this trip. Asia is a region where we now buy more goods and do more trade with than any other place in the world, commerce that supports millions of jobs back home. It's also a place where the risk of a nuclear arms race threatens our security and where extremists plan attacks on America's soil. And since this region includes some of the fastest growing nations, there can be no solution to the challenge of climate change without the cooperation of the Asia Pacific.

With this in mind, I traveled to Asia to open a new era of American engagement. We made progress with China and Russia in sending a unified message to Iran and North Korea that they must live up to their international obligations and either forsake nuclear weapons or face the consequences. As the two largest consumers and producers of energy, we developed a host of new clean energy initiatives with China, and our two nations agreed to work toward a successful outcome at the upcoming climate summit in Copenhagen, an outcome that leads to immediate action to reduce carbon pollution. And I spoke to young men and women at a town hall in Shanghai and across the Internet about certain values that we in America believe are universal: the freedom of worship and speech; the right to access information and to choose one's own leaders.

But above all, I spoke with leaders in every nation I visited about what we can do to sustain this economic recovery and bring back jobs and prosperity for our people, a task I will continue to focus on relentlessly in the weeks and months ahead.

This recession has taught us that we can't return to a situation where America's economic growth is fueled by consumers who take on more and more debt. In order to keep growing, we need to spend less, save more, and get our Federal deficit under control. We also need to place a greater emphasis on exports that we can build, produce, and sell to other nations, exports that can help create new jobs at home and raise living standards throughout the world.

For example, if we can increase our exports to Asia Pacific nations by just 5 percent, we can increase the number of American jobs supported by these exports by hundreds of thousands. This is already happening with businesses like American Superconductor Corporation, an energy technology startup based in Massachusetts that's been providing wind power and smart grid systems to countries like China, Korea, and India. By doing so, it's added more than 100 jobs over the last few years.

Increasing our exports is one way to create new jobs and new prosperity. But as we emerge from a recession that has left millions without work, we have an obligation to consider every additional, responsible step we can take to encourage and accelerate job creation in this

country. That's why I've announced that in the next few weeks, we'll be holding a forum at the White House on jobs and economic growth. I want to hear from CEOs and small-business owners, economists and financial experts, as well as representatives from labor unions and nonprofit groups, about what they think we can do to spur hiring and get this economy moving again.

It's important that we do not make any ill-considered decisions—even with the best of intentions—particularly at a time when our resources are so limited. But it is just as important that we are open to any demonstrably good idea to supplement the steps we've already taken to put America back to work. That's what I hope to achieve in this forum.

Still, there is no forum or policy that can bring all the jobs we've lost overnight. I wish there were, because so many Americans—friends, neighbors, family members—are desperately looking for work. But even though it will take time, I can promise you this: we are moving in the right direction; that the steps we are taking are helping; and I will not let up until businesses start hiring again, unemployed Americans start working again, and we rebuild this economy stronger and more prosperous than it was before. That has been the focus of our efforts these past 10 months, and it will continue to be our focus in the months and years to come.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 9:35 a.m. on November 19 at the Grand Hyatt Seoul in Seoul, South Korea, for broadcast on November 21. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 20, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m., e.s.t., on November 21.

Remarks on the "Educate to Innovate" Campaign
November 23, 2009

Thank you. I am extraordinarily excited to have you all here today. A couple of special acknowledgements I want to make: first of all, two of my outstanding Cabinet members, Secretary Arne Duncan, our Education Secretary, and Secretary Steven Chu, who is our Energy Secretary. They are both doing outstanding work each and every day.

I want to acknowledge Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson, who is from Texas, and she is one of the members of our Science and Technology Committee and doing outstanding work. NASA Administrator Charlie Bolden is in the house. Where's Charlie? There he is, right there in front. NSF Director Dr. Arden Bement is here, right there; Dr. John Holdren, my Science and Technology Adviser—where's John?—right there; Melody Barnes, our Domestic Policy Council chair or head, Director—[*laughter*]—Director.

And then we've got some students from—some wonderful students from some wonderful schools: Oakton High School in Vienna, Virginia; Longfellow Middle School in Fairfax, Virginia; the Washington Mathematics Science Technology Public Charter High School here in DC; and the Herndon High School in Herndon, Virginia. Welcome, everybody.

Now, the students from Oakton High School are going to be demonstrating the "cougar cannon," designed to scoop up and toss moon rocks. I am eager to see what they do for two reasons. As Presidents, I believe that robotics can inspire young people to pursue science and engineering. And I also want to keep an eye on those robots, in case they try anything. [*Laughter*]

It's an honor to be here and to be joined by Sally Ride, the first American woman in space. Sally. This is a person who's inspired a generation of girls and boys to think bigger and set their sights higher. I want to thank NASA and Charlie for providing the interactive globe, an innovative and engaging way of teaching young people about our world.

Welcome, Mythbusters, from Discovery Channel. Where are they? There they are. I hope you guys left the explosives at home. [*Laughter*] And finally, allow me to thank the

many leaders here today who've agreed to be part of this historic effort to inspire and educate the new generation in math and science.

We live in a world of unprecedented perils, but also unparalleled potential. Our medical system holds the promise of unlocking new cures, but it's attached to a health care system that's bankrupting families and businesses and our Government. The sources of energy that power our economy are also endangering our planet. We confront threats to our security that seek to exploit the very openness that is essential to our prosperity. And we face challenges in a global marketplace that link the trader to Wall Street to the homeowner on Main Street, to the office worker in America to the factory worker in China, an economy in which we all share in opportunity, but we also share, unfortunately, in crisis.

So the key to meeting these challenges—to improving our health and well being, to harnessing clean energy, to protecting our security, and succeeding in the global economy—will be reaffirming and strengthening America's role as the world's engine of scientific discovery and technological innovation. And that leadership tomorrow depends on how we educate our students today, especially in those fields that hold the promise of producing future innovations and innovators. And that's why education in math and science is so important.

Now, the hard truth is that for decades we've been losing ground. One assessment shows American 15-year-olds now rank 21st in science and 25th in math when compared to their peers around the world. And this isn't news. We've seen worrying statistics like this for years. Yet, time and again, we've let partisan and petty bickering stand in the way of progress. And time and again, as a nation, we've let our children down.

So I'm here and you are here because we all believe that we can't allow division and indifference to imperil our position in the world. It's time for all of us, in Washington and across America, to take responsibility for our future.

And that's why I'm committed to moving our country from the middle to the top of the pack in science and math education over the next decade. To meet this goal, the Recovery Act included the largest investment in education in history while preventing hundreds of thousands of educators from being fired because of State budget shortfalls. Under the outstanding leadership of Arne Duncan, we've launched a $4 billion Race to the Top fund, one of the largest investments in education reform in history.

And through the Race to the Top, States won't just be receiving funding, they'll have to compete for funding. And in this competition, producing the most innovative programs in math and science will be an advantage. In addition, we are challenging States to improve achievement by raising standards, using data to better inform decisions, and taking new approaches to turn around struggling schools. And because a great teacher is the single most important factor in a great education, we're asking States to focus on teacher effectiveness and to make it possible for professionals—like many of the people in this room—to bring their experience and enthusiasm into the classroom.

But you are here because you know the success we seek is not going to be attained by Government alone, it depends on the dedication of students and parents and the commitment of private citizens, organizations, and companies. It depends on all of us. That's why, back in April, at the National Academy of Sciences, I issued a challenge: to encourage folks to think of new and creative ways of engaging young people in science and engineering. And we are here because the leaders in this room answered that call to action.

Today we are launching the "Educate to Innovate" campaign, a nationwide effort to help reach the goal this administration has set: moving to the top in science and math education in the next decade. We've got leaders from private companies and universities, foundations and nonprofits, and organizations representing millions of scientists, engineers, and teachers from across America. The initial commitment of the private sector to this campaign is more than $260 million, and we only expect the campaign to grow.

Business leaders from Intel, Xerox, Kodak, and Time Warner Cable are teaming up with Sally Ride, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, as well as the Carnegie

Corporation, to find and replicate successful science, math, and technology programs all across America. Sesame Street has begun a 2-year initiative to teach young kids about math and science. And Discovery Communications is going to deliver interactive science content to 60,000 schools reaching 35 million students.

These efforts extend beyond the classroom. Time Warner Cable is joining with the Coalition for Science After School and FIRST Robotics—the program created by inventor Dean Kamen, which gave us the "cougar cannon"—to connect one million students with fun after-school activities, like robotics competitions. The MacArthur Foundation and industry leaders like Sony are launching a nationwide challenge to design compelling, freely available, science-related video games. And organizations representing teachers, scientists, mathematicians, and engineers—joined by volunteers in the community—are participating in a grassroots effort called "National Lab Day" to reach 10 million young people with hands-on learning.

Students will launch rockets, construct miniature windmills, and get their hands dirty. They'll have the chance to build and create—and maybe destroy just a little bit—[*laughter*]—to see the promise of being the makers of things and not just the consumers of things.

The administration is participating as well. We've already had a number of science-focused events with young people at the White House, including astronomy night a few weeks ago. The National Science Foundation and the Department of Energy, under the leadership of a terrific scientist, Steven Chu, have launched an innovative—an initiative to inspire tens of thousands of students to pursue careers in clean energy.

And today I'm announcing that we're going to have an annual science fair at the White House with the winners of national competitions in science and technology. If you win the NCAA championship, you come to the White House. Well, if you're a young person and you've produced the best experiment or design, the best hardware or software, you ought to be recognized for that achievement too. Scientists and engineers ought to stand side by side with athletes and entertainers as role models, and here at the White House we're going to lead by example. We're going to show young people how cool science can be.

Through these efforts, we're going to expand the scope and scale of science and math education all across America. And we're going to expand opportunities for all our young people, including women and minorities who too often have been underrepresented in scientific and technological fields, but who are no less capable of succeeding in math and science and pursuing careers that will help improve our lives and grow our economy. I also want to note that this is only the beginning. We're going to challenge the private sector to partner with community colleges, for example, to help train the workers of today for the jobs of tomorrow, even as we make college more affordable, so that, by 2020, America once again leads the world in producing college graduates.

Now, I have to say to the young people who are here, we can't let students off the hook. In the end, the success of this campaign depends on them. But I believe strongly that America's young people will rise to the challenge if given the opportunity and given a little bit of a push. We've got to work together to create those opportunities, because our future depends on it.

And I just want to mention the importance not only of students but also of parents. You know, I was in Asia, I think many of you are aware, for a week, and I was having lunch with the President of South Korea, President Lee. And I was interested in education policy—they've grown enormously over the last 40 years. And I asked him, what are the biggest challenges in your education policy? He said, "The biggest challenge that I have is that my parents are too demanding." [*Laughter*] He said, "Even if somebody is dirt poor, they are insisting that their kids are getting the best education." He said, "I've had to import thousands of foreign teachers because they're all insisting that Korean children have to learn English in elementary school." That was the biggest education challenge that he had, was

an insistence, a demand from parents for excellence in the schools.

And the same thing was true when I went to China. I was talking to the mayor of Shanghai, and I asked him about how he was doing recruiting teachers, given that they've got 25 million people in this one city. He said, "We don't have problems recruiting teachers because teaching is so revered and the pay scales for teachers are actually comparable to doctors and other professions."

That gives you a sense of what's happening around the world. There is a hunger for knowledge, an insistence on excellence, a reverence for science and math and technology and learning. That used to be what we were about. That's what we're going to be about again.

And I have to say that this doesn't get a lot of focus. Not once was I asked about education policy during my trip by the press. And oftentimes events like this get short shrift. They're not what's debated on cable. But this is probably going to make more of a difference in determining how well we do as a country than just about anything else that we do here.

Now, everyone in this room understands how important science and math can be. And it goes beyond the facts in a biology textbook or the questions on an algebra quiz. It's about the ability to understand our world, to harness and train that human capacity to solve problems and think critically, a set of skills that informs the decisions we make throughout our lives.

So yes, improving education in math and science is about producing engineers and researchers and scientists and innovators who are going to help transform our economy and our lives for the better. But it's also about something more. It's about expanding opportunity for all Americans in a world where an education is the key to success. It's about an informed citizenry in an era where many of the problems we face as a Nation are, at root, scientific problems. And it's about the power of science to not only unlock new discoveries, but to unlock in the minds of our young people a sense of promise, a sense that with some hard work, with effort, they have the potential to achieve extraordinary things.

This is a difficult time in our country, and it would be easy to grow cynical and wonder if America's best days are behind us, especially at a time of economic uncertainty, especially when we've seen so many, from Wall Street to Washington, fail to take responsibility for so long. But I believe we have an opportunity now to move beyond the failures of the recent past and to recapture that spirit of American innovation and optimism.

This Nation wasn't built on greed. It wasn't built on reckless risk. It wasn't built on short-term gains and short-sighted policies. It was forged of stronger stuff, by bold men and women who dared to invent something new or improve something old, who took big chances on big ideas, who believed that in America all things are possible. That's our history. And, if we remain fixed on the work ahead, if we build on the progress we've made today, this is going to be our legacy as well.

So with that, just as proof of the extraordinary promise of American young people, I'd like to invite Steven Harris and Brian Hortelano from Oakton High School to come up here and demonstrate what their team has built. And it's flashing so far. I don't see it whirling. [*Laughter*] Where are they? Give them a big round of applause.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:46 a.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Adam Savage and Jamie Hyneman, hosts of the Discovery Channel program "Mythbusters"; Dean Kamen, founder, Deka Research & Development; and Mayor Han Zheng of Shanghai, China.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting
November 23, 2009

Hello, everybody. I assembled my Cabinet today for updates on the progress we've made across several areas. Secretary Gates and Secretary Clinton spoke about issues of national

security. Peter Orszag had some discussion of our upcoming budget. And I updated the Cabinet on the progress that we're making on the health insurance reform legislation that's moving its way now through the Senate, and reiterated the urgent need for us to get to the finish line and provide relief, both in terms of costs and the quality of coverage that Americans get—are getting in their health care.

The primary focus of our discussion today, though, it had to do with the same thing that Americans sitting across kitchen tables all across the country are focused on, and that is jobs and the economy. If you look back at where we've been, in the first several months of my administration, because of the steps taken by people like Secretary Geithner and the rest of our economic team, we were able to stabilize the financial system and ensure that the economy didn't slip back into a depression. And we take this for granted now, but it is something that I think all the members of the Cabinet who participated are extremely proud of.

Since that time, we've passed a Recovery Act that's put a middle class tax cut into people's pockets, that has invested in infrastructure all across this country, and put people back to work, and something that isn't noted often enough, has helped stabilize state budgets at a time in which we could have seen hundreds of thousands of layoffs in teachers and police officers and firefighters.

Our economy is growing again for the first time in more than a year, and we know that economic growth is a prerequisite for job growth. But, having said that, what I emphasize today is we cannot sit back and be satisfied, given the extraordinarily high unemployment levels that we've seen. We have only taken the first step in curing our economy and making sure that it is moving on the right track. And I will not rest until businesses are investing again and businesses are hiring again and people have work again.

Now, this is going to be a challenging task. It's challenging because of the extraordinary blow that the financial crisis delivered to the economy as a whole. It is particularly difficult because both the financial sector and the housing sector were the biggest drivers of economic growth prior to the financial crisis, and so the severity of their pullback means that things are moving slower than we would like them to move.

One of the ironies that we have right now is, is that businesses across sectors are making profits again, but their primary way of making profit has been to cut costs, as opposed to seeing increased demand. And, unfortunately, the huge rise in productivity, which is normally a good thing, in this circumstance means that they have learned to produce the same amount of goods with fewer people. All these present some significant challenges in terms of us creating more jobs in this economy.

But, having said that, something that our economic team emphasized is that there are core strengths to the American economy that will put us in good stead over the long term. Having gone through this very wrenching adjustment, we continue to have the best universities in the world, the best innovation and technologies in the world. We continue to have some of the best workers in the world, the most productive workers in the world. And we have the kind of dynamism and entrepreneurship in our economies that's going to serve us well in the long term. The key is to bridge where we are now to that more prosperous future. And so a lot of the discussion, in a whole range of different sectors, was how do we move that job agendas forward.

For example, in the export area, I just came back from a trip to Asia in which one of my highest priorities was discussing how we can increase exports into that region. If we could just increase our exports by 5 percent into that region, that would mean hundreds of thousands of well paying jobs. And there's no reason that we can't do it. In fact, it turns out that they want our products and they want our technology, but partly because of regulatory restrictions, partly because of currency issues, partly because we just haven't been as aggressive as we need to be, we haven't gotten there.

That's something that we're going to be focusing on, on infrastructure. Although some of the payout extends beyond just a couple of years, us investing now in revamping our

exsting infrastructure and then starting to lay the foundation for things like high-speed rail can make all the difference in the world.

And in green technology, we are seeing some terrific ideas that could immediately put people back to work and save consumers money and help with the climate crisis that we have in place.

So, as many of you know, we're going to be having a jobs summit on December 3d. Part of the task of this Cabinet was to generate good ideas in anticipation of that jobs summit. We are going to be bringing together people from all across the country—business, labor, academics, non-for-profits, entrepreneurs, small and large businesses—to explore how we can jumpstart the hiring that typically lags behind economic growth, but we don't want to wait. We want to see if we can accelerate it. And I'm confident that we're going to be able to do it because I've got as good of a Cabinet as I think any President has ever had.

Let me just close by saying this. This is a week to give thanks. And I advised this hard-working Cabinet to get a little bit of rest this week, particularly the people who have been traveling around the globe for—day in and day out and don't know what time zone they're in.

But I think it's also a time to remember that this has been a very difficult year and a lot of people out there are having a very, very tough time. And I indicated to my Cabinet that as hard as they're working and as difficult as the political environment can be sometimes, we are extraordinarily blessed to be in a position where we can make a potential difference in the lives of millions of people. We need to take advantage of that opportunity and redouble our efforts in the months and years to come.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:27 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

Remarks at the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award Ceremony
November 23, 2009

Thank you. Please, everybody have a seat. Everybody have a seat. What a wonderful evening. Before I begin, let me just acknowledge some folks here in the crowd. First of all, Mrs. Kerry Kennedy, for the great work that she's doing day in, day out, Mr. Philip Johnston, thank you to both of you for helping to organize this tonight. Obviously, I've got to say thanks to my favorite people, Mrs. Robert F. Kennedy, also known as Ethel Kennedy. To Representative Donald M. Payne, Representative Gregory Meeks, and Representative Edward Markey, who are all here, thank you for your attendance and your support of this important award.

You know, every year for 24 years, starting the year this award was established, my friend, Senator Edward "Ted" Kennedy, spoke at this event. And I'm told that he looked forward to it all year, that he relished the chance to shine a bright light on an injustice and on those fighting it and to support them in that fight. He also enjoyed a family reunion. He relished the chance to pay tribute to those carrying on the unfinished work of his brother's life, work that for nearly half a century in the U.S. Senate he made his own.

And he was pleased that this award honored men and women across the globe doing a wide range of urgent work: fighting to end apartheid, advance democracy, empower minorities and indigenous peoples, promote free speech and elections, and more. Because Ted understood that Bobby's legacy wasn't a devotion to one particular cause or a faith in a certain ideology, but rather, it was a sensibility. A belief that in this world there is right and there is wrong, and it is our job to build our laws and our lives around recognizing the difference.

A sensitivity to injustice so acute that it can't be relieved by the rationalizations that make life comfortable for the rest of us, that others' suffering is not our problem, that the ills of the world are somehow not our concern, a moral orientation that renders certain people constitutionally incapable of remaining a bystander in the face of evil, a sensibility that recognizes the power of all people, however humble their circumstances, to change the course of history,

those are the traits of Bobby Kennedy that this award recognizes and the very traits that define the character and guide the life of this year's recipient.

And while we feel a certain sadness that Senator Kennedy is not with us to honor her, let us also take pleasure tonight in knowing just how much he would have loved and admired Magodonga Mahlangu and the organization that she helps lead, WOZA, which stands for Women of Zimbabwe Arise, and is represented tonight by one of its founders, Jenni Williams.

Now, as a young girl raised in Matabeleland—in the Matabeleland region of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s, Magodonga witnessed the—and I've got to make sure I get this right—Gukurahundi massacres, a systematic murder of many thousands of people, including her uncle and several cousins, many of whom were buried in mass graves that they'd been forced to dig themselves.

And she witnessed the fearful silence that followed, as talking about these events was forbidden. Magodonga found this to be intolerable. She wanted to speak out; she wanted people to know the truth about what was happening in her country.

So it was a revelation when, years later, she discovered a group called WOZA whose mission is the very opposite of silence. WOZA was started back in 2003 to empower women to speak out about the issues affecting their families and their country: desperate hunger, crumbling health and education systems, domestic violence and rape, and government repression ranging from restrictions on free expression to abduction and murder of dissidents.

WOZA's guiding principle is tough love, the idea that political leaders in Zimbabwe could use a little discipline. And who better to provide that than the nation's mothers? And since its founding, the organization has grown from a handful of activists to a movement of 75,000 strong. There's even a men's branch, I understand, MOZA. And over the past 7 years, they have conducted more than a hundred protests, maids and hairdressers, vegetable sellers and seamstresses, taking to the streets singing and dancing, banging on pots empty of food and brandishing brooms to express their wish to sweep the government clean.

They often don't get far before being confronted by President Mugabe's riot police. They have been gassed, abducted, threatened with guns, and badly beaten, forced to count out loud as each blow was administered. Three thousand WOZA members have spent time in custody or in prison, sometimes dragged with their babies into cells. Magodonga and Jenni are due back in court on December 7th, charged with conduct likely to cause a breach of peace. They face a 5 year sentence if convicted.

That so many women have decided to risk and endure so much is in many ways a testament to the extraordinary example of tonight's honoree. Each time they see Magodonga beaten back—beaten black and blue during one protest, only to get right back up and lead another, singing freedom songs at the top of her lungs in full view of security forces, the threat of a policeman's baton loses some of its power.

Each time her house is searched or her life is threatened or she's once again arrested—more than 30 times so far—she continues to stand in public and inspire the people of Zimbabwe, the power of the state then seems a little less absolute. Each time she's emerged from incarceration after enduring deplorable conditions, brutal abuse and gone right back to work, the prospect of prison loses some of its capacity to deter.

And by her example, Magodonga has shown the women of WOZA and the people of Zimbabwe that they can undermine their oppressors' power with their own power, that they can sap a dictator's strength with their own. Her courage has inspired others to summon theirs. And the organization's name, WOZA, which means "come forward," has become its impact even—its impact has been even more as people know of the violence that they face, and more people have come forward to join them.

More people have come to realize what Magodonga and the women of WOZA have known all along: That the only real way to teach love and nonviolence is by example.

Even when that means sitting down while being arrested, both as a sign that they refuse to retaliate, absorbing each blow without striking back, and a warning that, come what may, they're not going anywhere.

They even manage to show love to those who imprison them. As Jenni put it, "Many a time we've in effect conducted a workshop for our jailers, acting out the role of a mother and teaching how the country can be rebuilt if we have love in our hearts."

When asked how they can endure so much violence and what keeps them going in the face of such overwhelming odds, the women of WOZA reply, simply, each other. And that may be Magodonga's greatest achievement: That she has given the women of Zimbabwe each other; that she has given people who long for peace and justice each other; that she has given them a voice they can only have collectively and a strength that they can only have together.

They are a force to be reckoned with. Because history tells us, truth has a life of its own once it's told. Love can transform a nation once it's taught. Courage can be contagious, righteousness can spread, and there is much wisdom in the old proverb that God could not be everywhere, so he created mothers.

In the end, history has a clear direction, and it is not the way of those who arrest women and babies for singing in the streets. It's not the way of those who starve and silence their own people and cling to power by threat of force.

It is the way of the maid walking home in Montgomery, the young woman marching silently in the streets of Tehran, the leader imprisoned in her own home for her commitment to democracy. It is the way of young people in Cape Town who braved the wrath of their government to hear a young Senator from New York speak about the ripples of hope one righteous act can create. And it is the way that Magadonga Mahlangu and Jenni Williams and the women and men who take to the streets of Harare and Bulawayo, Victoria Falls, because they love their country and love their children and know that something better is possible.

Bobby Kennedy once said, "All great questions must be raised by great voices, and the greatest voice is the voice of the people—speaking out—in prose, or painting or poetry or music; speaking out—in homes and halls, streets and farms, courts and cafes—let that voice speak and the stillness you hear will be the gratitude of mankind."

Magodongo and WOZA have given so many of their fellow citizens of Zimbabwe that voice and tonight, we express our gratitude for their work. So it is now my pleasure to join with Mrs. Robert F. Kennedy to present the 2009 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award to Magodonga Mahlangu and WOZA.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:01 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Kerry Kennedy, daughter of former Sen. Robert F. Kennedy; Philip W. Johnston, chair of the board, Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice & Human Rights; and President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe.

Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony for Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India

November 24, 2009

Prime Minister Singh, Mrs. Gursharan Kaur, members of the Indian delegation, on behalf of Michelle and myself, it is a great pleasure to welcome you to the White House. On behalf of the American people, it is my great honor you—to welcome you to the United States.

Mr. Prime Minister, yours is the first official state visit of my Presidency, and it is fitting that you and India be so recognized. This visit reflects the high esteem in which I and the American people hold your wise leadership. It reflects the abiding bonds of respect and friendship between our people, including our friends in the Indian American community who join us here today.

But above all, your visit, at this pivotal moment in history, speaks to the opportunity before us to build the relationship between our

nations, born in the last century, into one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century.

For while our two nations have taken different paths to reach this moment, ours is a common story. It's the story of two proud people who struggled to break free from an empire and declare their independence. Two bold experiments with—in democracy with Constitutions that begin with the same simple words: We the people. Two great republics dedicated to the ideals of liberty, justice, equality, and the never-ending work of perfecting their union.

It's the story of two economic marvels fueled by an ethic of hard work and innovation. And today, our nations are two global leaders, driven not to dominate other nations, but to build a future of security and prosperity for all nations. Mr. Prime Minister, as we work to build that future, India is indispensable.

As leading economies, the United States and India can strengthen the global economic recovery, promote trade that creates jobs for both our people, and pursue growth that is balanced and sustained.

As nuclear powers, we can be full partners in preventing the spread of the world's most deadly weapons, securing loose nuclear materials from terrorists, and pursuing our shared vision of a world without nuclear weapons.

As people who've known the pain and anguish of terrorism, we can stand together, cooperating to prevent future attacks and promote the development and prosperity that undermines violent extremism.

As India becomes an increasingly influential global power, we can partner to meet other transnational challenges: developing clean energy partnerships, confronting climate change, stopping infectious disease, reducing hunger, and working to end extreme poverty in our time.

And as the world's largest democracies, we can keep faith with our common values: speaking out and standing up for the rights and dignity to which all human beings are entitled and showing that nations that respect the rights and aspirations of their people are ultimately more stable, more secure, and more successful.

This is the India that America welcomes today, a leader in Asia and around the world. These are the challenges we are summoned to meet in partnership. This is the progress that is possible today and in the days and years ahead.

And, Mr. Prime Minister, as we build our common future, we can draw strength from our shared past. For it was exactly 60 years ago, in a ceremony not unlike this, that an American President welcomed to the White House the first Prime Minister of an independent India. And while the decades that followed were not without their challenges, the spirit of that first visit is with us today, the same sense of possibility, the same hope for the future.

So as President Truman said of President [Prime Minister]* Nehru, it is my privilege to welcome "the respected leader of a great nation of free people." And as Prime Minister Nehru said of the work before them, may our two great nations "find many ways of working together in friendly and fruitful cooperation to our mutual advantage, and for the good of humanity."

Mr. Prime Minister, Mrs. Kaur, in that spirit, I welcome you to the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:25 a.m. in the East Room at the White House, where Prime Minister Singh was accorded a formal welcome with full military honors. In his remarks, he referred to Gursharan Kaur, wife of Prime Minister Singh. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Singh.

* White House correction.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India

November 24, 2009

President Obama. Please be seated. Hello, everybody. *Namaste*. I am very pleased to welcome Prime Minister Singh to the White House on this the first official visit of my Presidency. As I said earlier, this reflects our admiration for the Prime Minister's leadership, the deep bonds between the peoples of the United States and India, and the historic opportunity we have to strengthen and broaden the partnership between our nations.

India today is a rising and responsible global power. In Asia, Indian leadership is expanding prosperity and the security across the region. And the United States welcomes and encourages India's leadership role in helping to shape the rise of a stable, peaceful, and prosperous Asia.

Beyond Asia, as the world's largest multiethnic democracy, as one of the world's fastest growing economies, and as a member of the G–20, India will play a pivotal role in meeting the major challenges we face today. This includes my top economic priority, creating good jobs with good wages for the American people.

So I believe that the relationship between the United States and India will be one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century, and this visit underscores the strengthening of that partnership, which I hope will continue throughout my Presidency. That's why I've made it a priority to broaden the cooperation between our nations.

My administration's commitment to India can be seen in our new strategic dialogue, which addresses the full range of challenges and opportunities before us. And I'm pleased that we're joined today by the cochairs of our dialogue, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Foreign Minister Krishna.

And our commitment to India can be seen in my personal partnership with Prime Minister Singh. We've worked together on economic matters at our G–20 summits in London and Pittsburgh, as well as L'Aquila. I consider him a wise leader who has helped unleash India's extraordinary economic growth. He is a man of honesty and integrity. I respect him and I trust him, and I have happily accepted his gracious invitation to visit India next year.

Now, this spirit of friendship infuses our very productive discussions today and is the reason we've made so much progress in recent years. We agreed to strengthen the economic recovery and expand trade and investment so we can create jobs for both our peoples, Americans and Indians.

Indian investment in America is creating and sustaining jobs across the United States. The United States is India's largest trading and investment partner. There is significant balance in our trading relationships that I think is very important and reflective of the framework that we put forward at the G–20. And to sustain this momentum we're creating new initiatives to promote trade, investment, and technology cooperation, especially among our small and medium-sized businesses that create most of the jobs here in the United States.

I reaffirmed to the Prime Minister my administration's commitment to fully implement the U.S.-India civil nuclear agreement, which will increase American exports and create jobs in both countries.

We agreed to move forward with our commitments at the G–20 summit in Pittsburgh to pursue balanced growth while ensuring that emerging economies like India have a greater voice in shaping the international financial architecture.

We've made progress in confronting climate change. I commended the Prime Minister for India's leadership in areas like green buildings and energy efficiency, and we agreed to a series of important new efforts: a clean energy initiative that will create jobs and improve people's access to cleaner, more affordable energy, a green partnership to reduce poverty through sustainable and equitable development, and an historic effort to phase out subsidies for fossil fuels.

With just 2 weeks until the beginning of Copenhagen, it's also essential that all countries do

what is necessary to reach a strong operational agreement that will confront the threat of climate change while serving as a stepping stone to a legally binding treaty.

And to that end, Prime Minister Singh and I made important progress today. We reaffirmed that an agreement in Copenhagen should be comprehensive and cover all the issues under negotiation. We resolved to take significant national mitigation actions that will strengthen the world's ability to combat climate change. We agreed to stand by these commitments with full transparency through appropriate processes as to their implementation. All this builds on the progress that we made in Beijing, and it takes us one step closer to a successful outcome in Copenhagen.

We also agreed to deepen our cooperation against transnational threats. The American people join our Indian friends in remembering the horrific attacks in Mumbai 1 year ago this week. To prevent future attacks, we agreed that our law enforcement and intelligence agencies will work even closer, including sharing more information. We discussed my review of our policy in Afghanistan, and I thanked Prime Minister Singh for India's substantial contributions to the Afghan people.

I welcomed the Prime Minister's support for the nonproliferation agenda that I laid out in Prague, and I look forward to India's participation in our nuclear summit—nuclear security summit next year, as well as India's participation as a full partner in our shared vision of a world without nuclear weapons.

Now, part of that vision is working together to ensure that all nations, including Iran and South—North Korea, live up to their international obligations. We agreed to expand the educational exchanges that will fuel our knowledge-based economies. We're dramatically expanding the Fulbright-Nehru program that brings so many of our students and scholars together, especially in science and technology. And we are increasing ties and exchanges between our universities and community colleges as part of a new Obama-Singh or Singh-Obama—[*laughter*]—21st Century Knowledge Initiative. We think it's appropriately named.

To advance our historic food security initiative, American and Indian researchers will collaborate to improve agricultural output and reduce hunger, not only in India, where enormous strides have been made, but around the world. And India has much to teach the developing world in terms of achieving food sufficiency.

And our Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will partner with their Indian counterparts to create a new disease detection center in India to combat infectious diseases and promote global health.

So this is the concrete progress made today across a whole range of issues to create jobs, opportunity, and security for our people. As a result, I believe the relationship between our two countries has never been stronger, a reminder that it will be one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century.

We look forward to celebrating our partnership tonight, as Michelle and I host the Prime Minister and Mrs. Kaur at the first state dinner of my Presidency. It will be another opportunity to convey to the Prime Minister and the people of India, as India assumes its rightful place as a global leader in this century, that you will have no better friend and partner than the United States of America.

Mr. Prime Minister, thank you so much for your presence here today. The floor is yours.

Prime Minister Singh. Mr. President, distinguished ladies and gentlemen of the media, I thank from the core of my heart President Obama for his very generous hospitality and for his very warm sentiments towards India and to me in particular. I am honored to be here today in this great country at the invitation of His Excellency the President.

When India and the United States meet, it is a moment to celebrate the values of democracy, pluralism, liberty, and freedom. Today we have done that and much more.

In our discussions today, we reaffirmed the importance of our relationship and decided on future steps to enhance our strategic partnership. We have agreed to further intensify our trade, investment, and economic cooperation in a way that creates jobs and prosperity in

both our two countries and stimulates global economic recovery.

We admire the leadership that President Obama has provided to stimulate and guide the G–20 process that is now fully in place. We have decided to give a fresh impetus to collaborations in the fields of education, agriculture, and health. We will deepen our ongoing cooperation in frontier areas of science and technology, nuclear power, and space. This will open new opportunities for our universities and laboratories and create human capital to meet the global needs of the future.

We had a very constructive exchange of views on strategic issues. Our defense cooperation is progressing well. We agreed on the early and full implementation of our civil nuclear cooperation agreement. Our strategic partnership should facilitate transfer of high technologies to India. The lifting of U.S. export controls on high technology exports to India will open vast opportunities for giant research and development efforts. It will enable U.S. industry to benefit from the rapid economic and technological transformation that is now underway in our country.

In a few weeks from now, the meeting of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will take place in Copenhagen. Both President Obama and I have agreed on the need for a substantive and comprehensive outcome, which would cover mitigation, adaptation, finance, and technology. We reaffirmed our intention to work to this end bilaterally and with all other countries.

We welcome the President's commitment to a major program for promotion of renewable energy, and I drew his attention to India's own ambitious national action plan on climate change, which has eight national missions covering both mitigation and adaptation.

Just as we partnered each other in the shaping of the knowledge economy, we have the opportunity today to become partners in developing the green economy of the future. I underlined India's desire to benefit from clean and energy-efficient technologies from the United States. Our partnership will contribute to global efforts to combat climate change and achieve energy security.

We had a detailed discussion on important regional and global issues. We agreed that the Indo-U.S. partnership was important for addressing the challenges of an increasingly interdependent world that we live in. The global economic crisis has brought home the fact that our prosperity is interlinked.

Our dialogue covered the need to have an open and inclusive architecture in the Asia Pacific regions. It is important for the international community to sustain its engagement in Afghanistan, to help its emergence as a modern state.

The focus—the forces of terrorism in our region pose a grave threat to the entire civilized world and have to be defeated. President Obama and I have decided to strengthen our cooperation in the area of counterterrorism.

India welcomes the renewed international interest in nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation. We have been a consistent advocate of a world free of nuclear weapons. We will work with the United States and other countries for the success of the nuclear security summit, which President Obama is hosting next April.

In our discussions today, there was a meeting of minds on the future direction of our relations. I was deeply impressed by President Obama's strong commitment to the India-U.S. strategic partnership and by the breadth of his vision for global peace and prosperity. I have invited President Obama to visit India. A very warm welcome awaits him, his gracious wife, and his two daughters.

I thank you.

President Obama. Thank you very much.

We're going to take one question each, one from an American journalist and one from an Indian journalist. And I'm going to call on Mark Knoller [CBS Radio]. Where's Mark? There you are. Good to see you, Mark.

Military Operations in Afghanistan

Q. Good to see you, sir. Mr. President, I suspect you don't want my colleagues and I to rely on leaks until next week, so I'd like to ask you about——

President Obama. Why stop now? [*Laughter*]

Q. Well, perhaps you'd like to help us set a new stage in our relationship by telling us where you stand on your decision on Afghanistan. You had your—what we were told was your final meeting last evening. Can you tell us how many more troops you'll be sending to Afghanistan, how you'll be paying for them, and whether you'll be announcing a timetable and/or exit strategy for them?

President Obama. Mark, I will be making an announcement to the American people about how we intend to move forward. I will be doing so shortly.

I think that the review that we've gone through has been comprehensive and extremely useful and has brought together my key military advisers, but also civilian advisers. I can tell you, as I've said before, that it is in our strategic interest, in our national security interest to make sure that Al Qaida and its extremist allies cannot operate effectively in those areas. We are going to dismantle and degrade their capabilities and, ultimately, dismantle and destroy their networks. And Afghanistan's stability is important to that process.

I've also indicated that after 8 years—some of those years in which we did not have, I think, either the resources or the strategy to get the job done—it is my intention to finish the job. And I feel very confident that when the American people hear a clear rationale for what we're doing there and how we intend to achieve our goals that they will be supportive.

Now, I think it's worth mentioning since I'm with the Prime Minister of India that this important not just to the United States, but it's important to the world, and that the whole world, I think, has a core security interest in making sure that the kind of extremism and violence that you've seen emanating from this region is tackled, confronted in a serious way.

Now, we have to do it as part of a broader international community. And so one of the things I'm going to be discussing is the obligations of our international partners in this process. It's going to be very important to recognize that the Afghan people, ultimately, are going to have to provide for their own security. And so we'll be discussing that process whereby Afghan security forces are properly trained and equipped to do the job. And it's going to be important to recognize that in order for us to succeed there you've got to have a comprehensive strategy that includes civilian and diplomatic efforts.

So I think that's a sufficient preview to last until after Thanksgiving, Mark.

Q. Tuesday night, sir?

President Obama. After Thanksgiving. [*Laughter*] And I'm sure that at that point, if there are further questions, that we'll be answering them to the satisfaction not just of you, but to the satisfaction of the American people.

Prime Minister Singh. Ms. Smita Prakash.

India-U.S. Relations/Pakistan-U.S. Relations/India and Pakistan

Q. Sir, my question to you: Would you call India and the U.S. as natural allies, especially in the sphere of combating the terrorism in our region? Because there is a perception in India that the military aid that you give Pakistan is misused against India, and it is really the epicenter of terrorism. Did this issue come up in your discussions with the Prime Minister, and would you be pressurizing Pakistan to get its act in order? And to the Prime Minister, I'd like to ask when is the nuclear deal really going to go on the road?

President Obama. Well, first of all, I think that the United States and India are natural allies not just around counterterrorism issues, but on a whole host of issues. As we discussed earlier, we're the world's two largest democracies. We have a range of shared values and ideals. We're both entrepreneurial societies. We're both multiethnic societies. We are societies that believe in human rights and core freedoms that are enshrined in our founding documents.

And one of the things that I think makes us such strong allies is the people-to-people contact. It's one thing for leaders to have exchanges like this one, and that's very important, obviously. But the incredible contributions that Indian Americans have made to the growth of

our country and the degree to which they are woven into the very fabric of our society, the fact that very few Indians don't have some family member somewhere who has a connection to the United States, that kind of exchange strengthens and deepens the bonds between our two countries in a profound way.

Now, with respect to security issues in the region, Prime Minister and I—Prime Minister Singh and I had extensive discussions about that. I think we both recognize that our core goal is to achieve peace and security for all peoples in the region, not just one country or the other. And one of the things I admire most about Prime Minister Singh is that, I think, at his core he is a man of peace.

Obviously, there are historic conflicts between India and Pakistan. It is not the place of the United States to try to, from the outside, resolve all those conflicts. On the other hand, we want to be encouraging of ways in which both India and Pakistan can feel secure and focus on the development of their own countries and their people.

With respect to the relationship between the United States and Pakistan's military, I think that there have probably been times in the past in which we were so single-mindedly focused just on military assistance in Pakistan that we didn't think more broadly about how to encourage and develop the kinds of civil society in Pakistan that would make a difference in the lives of people day to day.

And Secretary Clinton, I think, has done an excellent job in trying to move forward. Where is she? I thought she was around here somewhere. But anyway, she's done an excellent job, I think, in helping our State Department to refocus our energies on that front as well.

And obviously, Pakistan has an enormously important role in the security of the region by making sure that the extremist organizations that often operate out of its territories are dealt with effectively. And we've seen some progress. The work that the Pakistan military is doing in the Swat Valley in west—in South Waziristan all indicates the degree to which they are beginning to recognize that extremism, even if initially directed to the outside, can ultimately also have an adverse impact on their security internally.

So my hope is, is that over time what we're going to see is further clarity and further cooperation between all the parties and all peoples of good will in the region to eradiate terrorist activity, to eradicate the kind of violent extremism that we've seen. I think that will benefit the peoples of Pakistan and India and the world community as well.

Prime Minister Singh. The President and myself had a very useful and productive exchange of views relating to security, peace, and counterterrorism in our regions. I'm very satisfied with the outcome of my discussion with President Obama.

As far as the nuclear deal is concerned, the President has reaffirmed that it is the common resolve of our two governments to operationalize the nuclear deal as early as possible. There are a few i's and t's which have to be crossed about—crossed around, and I am confident and I have the assurance of the President that that process can be completed without much further loss of time.

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:04 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Minister of External Affairs Somanahalli Mallaiah Krishna of India; and Gursharan Kaur, wife of Prime Minister Singh.

Joint Statement by the United States of America and India: Partnership for a Better World

November 24, 2009

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and President Barack Obama today reaffirmed the global strategic partnership between India and the United States, and launched a new phase in

this partnership. Commending the deepening bilateral cooperation between the world's two largest democracies across a broad spectrum of human endeavors, the two leaders recognized that the common ideals and complementary strengths of India and the United States today provide a foundation for addressing the global challenges of the 21st century.

The two leaders noted that the shared values cherished by their peoples and espoused by their founders—democracy, pluralism, tolerance, openness, and respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights—are acquiring an increasingly greater prominence in building a more peaceful, prosperous, inclusive, secure and sustainable world. These values are exemplified by the vibrant linkages between their peoples, which are a unique asset for both countries, and are reflected in the role played by the Indian-American community.

The two leaders resolved to harness these shared strengths and to expand the U.S.-India global partnership for the benefit of their countries, for peace, stability and prosperity in Asia, and for the betterment of the world. To this end, they committed to build upon the India-U.S. Strategic Dialogue announced in July 2009. President Obama stated that the United States looks forward to a stable and prosperous India playing an increasingly important role in world affairs.

Advancing Global Security and Countering Terrorism

Prime Minister Singh and President Obama recognized that the India-U.S. partnership is indispensable for global peace and security. In this context, the interests of both countries are best advanced through the values mirrored in their societies.

They acknowledged the common threat that international terrorism poses to regional and global security. They condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and declared that there could be no justification for terrorism anywhere.

On the eve of its first anniversary, President Obama reiterated the United States's condemnation of the terrorist attack in Mumbai in November 2008. The two leaders underscored the absolute imperative to bring to justice the perpetrators of this terrorist attack.

They expressed their grave concern about the threat posed by terrorism and violent extremists emanating from India's neighborhood, whose impact is felt beyond the region. The two leaders agreed that resolute and credible steps must be taken to eliminate safe havens and sanctuaries that provide shelter to terrorists and their activities. These undermine security and stability in the region and around the world.

They vowed to redouble their efforts to deal effectively with terrorism, while protecting their countries' common ideals and shared values and committed themselves to strengthening global consensus and legal regimes against terrorism. They decided on a Counterterrorism Cooperation Initiative to expand collaboration on counterterrorism, information sharing, and capacity building.

The two leaders reiterated their shared interest in the stability, development and independence of Afghanistan and in the defeat of terrorist safe havens in Pakistan and Afghanistan. President Obama appreciated India's role in reconstruction and rebuilding efforts in Afghanistan. The two leaders agreed to enhance their respective efforts in this direction.

The two leaders committed to continue pursuing mutually beneficial defense cooperation through the existing security dialogue, service-level exchanges, defense exercises and trade and technology transfer and collaboration. They recognized the scope for cooperation in the areas of non-traditional threats to security, peacekeeping, humanitarian and disaster relief, and maritime security and protecting sea lanes of communication. They agreed to expedite necessary arrangements to facilitate these activities.

The two leaders agreed that strengthening high technology trade between their countries is in the spirit of their strategic dialogue and partnership. They reiterated their shared commitment to technology security and that it is in their mutual interest to invigorate this area of their partnership.

Prime Minister Singh and President Obama reaffirmed their shared vision of a world free

of nuclear weapons and pledged to work together, as leaders of responsible states with advanced nuclear technology, for global non-proliferation, and universal, non-discriminatory and complete nuclear disarmament. Part of that vision is working together to ensure that all nations live up to their international obligations. India reaffirmed its unilateral and voluntary moratorium on nuclear explosive testing. The United States reaffirmed its testing moratorium and its commitment to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and bring it into force at an early date. Both leaders agreed to consult each other regularly and seek the early start of negotiations on a multilateral, non-discriminatory and internationally verifiable Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty at the Conference on Disarmament. They noted that nuclear terrorism, and clandestine networks are a matter of grave concern. Prime Minister Singh and President Obama look forward to the April 2010 Nuclear Security Summit and working together with all participating states for the success of the Summit.

Ensuring Sustainable Global Development and a Clean Energy Future

Recognizing that energy security, food security, climate change are interlinked, and that eliminating poverty and ensuring sustainable development and a clean energy future are among the foremost global objectives, the two leaders agreed to enter into a Green Partnership to address these global challenges.

They two Leaders reaffirmed their intention to promote the full, effective and sustained implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in accordance with the Bali Action Plan. Recognizing their special role in promoting a successful and substantive outcome at the UNFCCC 15th Conference of Parties at Copenhagen in December, 2009, they reaffirmed their intention to work together bilaterally and with all other countries for an agreed outcome at that meeting.

The two leaders also affirmed that the Copenhagen outcome must be comprehensive and cover mitigation, adaptation, finance and technology, and in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, it should reflect emission reduction targets of developed countries and nationally appropriate mitigation actions of developing countries. There should be full transparency through appropriate processes as to the implementation of aforesaid mitigation actions. The outcome should further reflect the need for substantially scaled-up financial resources to support mitigation and adaptation in developing countries, in particular, for the poorest and most vulnerable. It should also include measures for promoting technology development, dissemination and transfer and capacity building, including consideration of a center or a network of centers to support and stimulate climate innovation. India and the United States, consistent with their national circumstances, resolved to take significant national mitigation actions that will strengthen the world's ability to combat climate change. They resolved to stand by these commitments.

Recognizing the need to create the clean energy economy of the 21st century, Prime Minister Singh and President Obama agreed to launch a Clean Energy and Climate Change Initiative. The goal of the Initiative would be to improve the lives of the people of both countries by developing and improving access to technologies that make our energy cleaner, affordable and more efficient. The Initiative will include cooperation in wind and solar energy, second generation bio-fuels, unconventional gas, energy efficiency, and clean coal technologies including carbon capture and storage. The success of this Initiative is expected to enhance the ability of India and the United States to provide new economic opportunities for their people and create new clean energy jobs.

The two leaders intend to take practical steps to promote global food security, including by advancing the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative. They looked forward to increasing India-U.S. agricultural cooperation with the purpose of promoting agricultural research, human resources capacity building, natural resource management, agri-business and food processing, and collaborative research for increasing food productivity. This cooperation would contribute to joint development of technology that

would improve weather forecasting, including predicting monsoons, and technology that would contribute to food productivity and food security efforts in India.

They agreed to collaborate in the application of their space technology and related scientific capabilities in outer space and for development purposes, including in the field of agriculture.

The two leaders reiterated their intention to realize the full potential of the India-U.S. Agreement for Cooperation concerning the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy through the implementation of its provisions. They agreed to expedite U.S. firms' participation in the implementation of this agreement.

Stimulating Global Economic Revival

Prime Minister Singh and President Obama noted the new opportunities offered by their economies and their respective strengths, and their potential for future growth to catalyze global economic growth, and pledged to create conditions that would facilitate their continued expansion.

The leaders also noted that the United States is currently the largest trading partner of India in goods and services. The leaders reiterated their pledge to bolster and deepen cooperation on economic, trade and agricultural issues, including working bilaterally and with multilateral trade organizations to foster increased trade. Both leaders welcomed the potential for further expanding trade and investment between their countries, including in sectors such as infrastructure, information and communication technologies, healthcare services, education services, energy and environmentally friendly technologies.

As members of the G–20, they agreed to advance the G–20 understandings including with regard to energy security and resisting protectionism in all its forms. The two leaders agreed to facilitate greater movement of professionals, investors and business travelers, students, and exchange visitors between our two countries to enhance their economic and technological partnership.

They committed to strengthen and reform the global economic and financial architecture in the G–20, World Bank and the IMF. They resolved to seek an ambitious and balanced outcome of the Doha Round, consistent with its mandate and reaffirmed their commitment to an open, fair, equitable, transparent and rule-based multilateral trading system.

The two leaders announced their intention to develop a Framework for Cooperation on Trade and Investment. This Framework is expected to foster an environment conducive to technological innovation and collaboration, promote inclusive growth and job creation, and support opportunities for increased trade and investment—including for small and medium-sized enterprises. They agreed to launch the U.S.-India Financial and Economic Partnership to strengthen engagement on economic, financial, and investment-related issues.

The two leaders welcomed the progress achieved in the discussions on a Bilateral Investment Treaty and pledged to take further initiatives that would contribute to creating a more conducive environment for investment flows.

They recognized the contribution of the business and industrial sectors of both countries in this regard and called upon the India-U.S. CEOs Forum to identify new directions in the India-U.S. economic relationship.

Educating and Empowering Future Generations

Recognizing the cultural emphasis on education in both countries, Prime Minister Singh and President Obama emphasized that education holds the key to the advancement of their societies, and to a more prosperous and stable world.

They agreed that access to and development of technology was a cross-cutting requirement to meet the challenges that their two countries face. They acknowledged the fruitful collaboration between the two countries in the fields of education, research and science and technology, which has contributed to their emergence as knowledge societies.

Taking advantage of that strength, President Obama and Prime Minister Singh launched the Obama-Singh 21st Century Knowledge Initiative with funding from both

sides to increase university linkages and junior faculty development exchanges between U.S. and Indian universities, including greater emphasis on community colleges.

They agreed to substantially expand the Fulbright-Nehru program to provide more student and scholar exchange grants in priority fields such as science, technology and agriculture. The two leaders reaffirmed the importance of expanding cooperation in higher education and research, and according priority to cooperation in the area of skill development.

They also expressed their support for the India-U.S. Binational Science and Technology Commission and the Endowment, which is expected to give a fresh impetus to collaboration in the cutting-edge areas of scientific research, technology and development.

The leaders affirmed the importance of women's empowerment to advancing global prosperity and stability, and welcomed the establishment of a Women's Empowerment Dialogue to promote women's participation and equality in all spheres. They emphasized that women's empowerment is a cross-cutting goal that should be pursued across the full scope of U.S.-India Strategic Dialogue initiatives.

Protecting the Health of Our People

Prime Minister Singh and President Obama welcomed the strong collaboration between India and the United States in the area of public health. They agreed to build on existing strong ties across academia and scientific communities by advancing public health and biomedical research collaborations between the United States and India. The two countries plan to establish a Regional Global Disease Detection Center in India and to build a partnership with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The leaders also pledged to enhance collaboration in controlling diseases such as polio, and discovering new and affordable technologies and treatments for the benefit of their peoples and for those of other countries who seek their assistance.

Towards More Effective Global Cooperation

Prime Minister Singh and President Obama recognized that the India-U.S. relationship is important for managing the challenges the world will face in the 21st century.

The two leaders underscored the compelling need to put in place global institutions which are both inclusive and effective to meet present and future challenges. They welcomed the emergence of the G–20 as a premier forum to deal with international economic issues. The two leaders recognized the scope for their countries to increase cooperation in peacekeeping, development and the promotion of essential human freedoms. They committed themselves to achieving genuine reform of the United Nations including in its Security Council in a manner that reflects the contemporary realities of the 21st century and thereby enhances its ability to carry out its mandate as a representative, credible and effective forum for meeting the challenges of the new century.

Prime Minister Singh thanked President Obama and the people of the United States of America for their generous hospitality and warm welcome. President Obama looks forward to visiting India with his family in the near future.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks at a State Dinner Honoring Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India

November 24, 2009

President Obama. Please be seated. Good evening, everyone. On behalf of Michelle and myself, welcome to the White House. *Aapka swagat hai*.

Many of you were here when I was honored to become the first President to help celebrate Diwali, the festival of lights. Some of you were here for the first White House celebration of the birth of the founder of Sikhism, Guru

Nanak. Tonight we gather again for the first state dinner of my Presidency, with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Mrs. Gursharan Kaur, as we celebrate the great and growing partnership between the United States and India.

As we all know, in India, some of life's most treasured moments are often celebrated under the cover of a beautiful tent. It's a little like tonight. We have incredible food and music and are surrounded by great friends. For it's been said that "the most beautiful things in the universe are the starry heavens above us and the feeling of duty within us."

Mr. Prime Minister, today we work to fulfill our duty—bring our countries closer together than ever before. Tonight, under the stars, we celebrate the spirit that will sustain our partnership, the bonds of friendship between our people.

It's a bond that includes more than 2 million Indian Americans who enrich every corner of our great Nation—leaders in government, science, industry, and the arts—some of whom join us tonight. And it's the bond of friendship between a President and a Prime Minister who are bound by the same unshakable spirit of possibility and brotherhood that transformed both our nations, a spirit that gave rise to movements led by giants like Gandhi and King and which are the reason that both of us can stand here tonight.

And so, as we draw upon these ties that bind our common future together, I want to close with the words that your first Prime Minister spoke at that midnight hour on the eve of Indian independence, because Nehru's words speak to our hopes tonight: "The achievement we celebrate today is but a step, an opening of opportunity, to the great triumphs and achievements that await us. . . .The past is over, and it is the future that beckons us now."

So I propose a toast to all of you.

Does the Prime Minister get a glass? Thank you. Just logistically, we want to make sure the Prime Minister has a glass here. [*Laughter*]

To the future that beckons all of us, let us answer its call. And let our two great nations realize all the triumphs and achievements that await us. Cheers.

[*At this point, President Obama offered a toast.*]

Prime Minister Singh. Mr. President; the First Lady, Mrs. Michelle Obama; distinguished guests: I feel privileged to be invited to this first state banquet, Mr. President, under your distinguished Presidency. You do us and the people of India great honor by this wonderful gesture on your part. We are overwhelmed by the warmth of your hospitality, the courtesy you have extended to us personally, and the grace and charm of the First Lady.

Mr. President, your journey to the White House has captured the imagination of millions and millions of people in India. You are an inspiration to all those who cherish the values of democracy, diversity, and equal opportunity.

Mr. President, I can do no better than to describe your achievements in the words of Abraham Lincoln, who said, and I quote, "In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It is the life in your years," unquote.

Mr. President, we warmly applaud the recognition by the Nobel Committee of the healing touch you have provided and the power of your idealism and your vision.

Mr. President, your leadership of this great nation of the United States coincides with a time of profound changes taking place in the world at large. We need to find new pathways of international cooperation that respond more effectively to the grave challenges caused by the growing interdependence of nations. As two leading democracies, India and the United States must play a leading role in building a shared destiny for all humankind.

Mr. President, a strong and sustained engagement between our two countries is good for our people, and equally, it is highly important for the world as a whole. We are embarking on a new phase of our partnership. We should build on our common values and interests to realize the enormous potential and promise of our partnership.

Our expanding cooperation in areas of social and human development, science and technology, energy, and other related areas will improve the quality of lives of millions of

people in our country. The success of the nearly 2.7 million strong American community is a tribute to our common ethos. They have enriched and deepened our ties, and I thank them profoundly from the core of my heart.

Mr. President, I convey my very best wishes to you. Mr. President, as you lead this great Nation, I look forward to working with you to renew and expand our strategic partnership. I wish you and the people of America a very, very happy Thanksgiving.

Ladies and gentlemen, I invite you to join me in a toast to the health and happiness of President Barack Obama and the First Lady, Mrs. Obama, the friendly people of the United States of America, and stronger and stronger friendship between India and the United States of America.

President Obama. Cheers.

[*A toast was offered*.]

President Obama. Thank you, everybody. Enjoy your evening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gursharan Kaur, wife of Prime Minister Singh.

The President's News Conference With President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea in South Korea

November 19, 2009

President Lee. We have beautiful weather today. I know that yesterday we had subzero cold. And President Obama brought with him very nice weather. On behalf of the people of the Republic of Korea, I wish to extend our warmest welcome and greetings to President Obama and his delegation.

We know how much President Obama appreciates and understands the value of Korean and Asian cultures. I believe that President Obama's global leadership, a leadership that is based on mutual respect and mutual goals, will help usher in an era of hope and renewal to the United States and better serve peace and prosperity throughout the world.

Having held three summit meetings with him and having met many times in various multilateral settings over the past 10 months, I think I can say that we have indeed become very close friends. In particular, I think our discussions today have been particularly in-depth and very fruitful, very honest talks. The relationship between our two countries is excellent and stands stronger than ever. President Obama and I believe that it can become even stronger. So we will continue to consult on specific ways to move our relationship forward.

President Obama and I reaffirmed the solid ROK-U.S. defense posture, including the extended deterrence. We also agreed to further develop our partnership so that it can become an example of what a strategic alliance of the 21st century should be by faithfully implementing the joint vision for the alliance adopted at our last meeting in June.

As part of these efforts, we agreed to have our foreign and defense ministers to meet and discuss specific ways to develop our alliance to the future sometime next year, which marks the 60th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean war.

President Obama and I expressed our shared satisfaction that Korea and the United States are working closely together with regards to our approach vis-a-vis North Korea and the nuclear issue. We also reaffirmed our commitment to the complete and verifiable denuclearization of North Korea through the six-party talks. We fully share the view that the North Korean nuclear issue requires a definite and comprehensive resolution, as I described in our grand bargain, and agreed to closely consult on how to elaborate and implement this approach.

It is my hope that North Korea would accept our proposal so that we can usher in a new era in which North Korea can be assured of its security and its people can enjoy real improvements in their quality of life. We agreed to work

closely together with the other countries in the six-party process to bring North Korea back to the six-party talks at an early date, and make sure that North Korea takes substantive measures towards its denuclearization. Moreover, we noted our shared concern for North Korean humanitarian issues and agreed to work together to bring improvements in this area.

Meanwhile, President Obama and I reaffirmed the economic and strategic importance of the Korea-U.S. free trade agreement. We agreed to redouble our efforts to move the agreement forward.

Noting with satisfaction the achievements of the G–20 summit meeting in Pittsburgh, President Obama and I agreed to continue cooperating on implementing a framework for ensuring a strong, sustainable, and balanced growth. We also agreed to work together to ensure the success of next November's G–20 summit to be held here in Korea.

At the same time, we share the view that such global challenges as climate change, green growth, nonproliferation, and counterterrorism requires a collective response. In particular, I would like to commend President Obama's endeavor towards a world without nuclear weapons, and in this respect, the Republic of Korea intends to participate in and do its part to ensure the success of next April's nuclear security summit in Washington, DC.

I am very pleased that we were able to have candid discussions on important issues that confront us, and I'm happy that we produced fruitful outcomes. I also wish to once again congratulate President Obama on his very successful trip to Asia. And let me once again join the Korean people in expressing to President Obama and his delegation our warmest sentiments of friendship.

Thank you.

President Obama. Well, it's a great honor to be making my first trip to the Republic of Korea as President of the United States. I want to thank my good friend President Lee and the Korean people for their extraordinary hospitality. And I have to say that the arrival ceremony for our state visit was as spectacular as any that we've seen.

I was privileged to host President Lee in Washington in June. As he mentioned, we've seen each other at many multilateral forums as well, and we've developed a strong working relationship and friendship. And it's a great pleasure to visit this beautiful city.

The Republic of Korea is a close and valued friend and ally of the United States. The strong bonds between our people were forged in the battles of the Korean war nearly 60 years ago. Our alliance, which is grounded in shared interests and values, has provided peace and security on this peninsula and in the region for many decades. And I'm pleased to say that our alliance has never been stronger than it is today.

The 60th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean war presents an important opportunity to honor the service of our veterans, to reflect on the principles for which they fought, and to move forward in adapting our alliance to meet the challenges of the 21st century. As part of this process, we agreed that Secretaries Clinton and Gates will meet with their Korean counterparts next year to work on realizing our shared vision for the alliance going forward.

The Republic of Korea has made extraordinary progress in the six decades since the Korean war. Evidence of that progress can be seen in Korea's strong democracy, its vibrant economy, but it can also be seen in Korea's increasingly prominent role in global affairs. Indeed, in just one generation, the Republic of Korea has gone from a recipient of aid to a donor nation and, under the leadership of President Lee, a leader within the G–20.

The United States has been proud to stand as a friend and ally of the Korean people throughout this period. Later today I'll also visit some of our service men and women, who represent America's unwavering commitment to the security of this country.

In going forward, I know that our two nations can strengthen our cooperation on a range of critical issues, including several that we discussed today.

On North Korea, our Governments have maintained extraordinarily close cooperation, and President Lee and I are in full agreement on our common approach going forward. I

reaffirmed my commitment to continue working together in the six-party process to achieve a definitive and comprehensive resolution of the nuclear issue. As a part of that effort, we will be sending Ambassador Bosworth to North Korea on December 8th to engage in direct talks with the North Koreans.

Our message is clear: If North Korea is prepared to take concrete and irreversible steps to fulfill its obligations and eliminate its nuclear weapons program, the United States will support economic assistance and help promote its full integration into the community of nations. That opportunity and respect will not come with threats. North Korea must live up to its obligations.

The Republic of Korea is also, obviously, a close trading partner of the United States, and the relationship between our nations advance our common prosperity. To strengthen those ties, President Lee and I discussed the U.S.-Korea free trade agreement, which holds out the promise of serving our mutual interests. And together, we're committed to working together to move the agreement forward.

I also thanked President Lee for his leadership at the G–20, as we continue our efforts to transition from rescuing the global economy to promoting balanced and sustainable growth. In that effort, Korea will play a critical role as a host for the G–20 next year.

We also discussed the importance of promoting security and stability in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and I welcomed President Lee's decision to establish a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan. This important contribution will help support the strengthening of Afghan capacity, which is essential to achieving our goals in Afghanistan.

And finally, we agreed to coordinate our efforts to clean energy and climate change. I told President Lee that Korea's recent announcement of an ambitious target for 2020 is a model for emerging economies. And building on the progress that we made at APEC and in Beijing, I will continue to work closely with President Lee to help pave the way for a successful outcome in Copenhagen next month.

Once again, I want to thank President Lee and the Korean people for their warm hospitality. I look forward to working with you, Mr. President, to strengthen a relationship that does so much to advance the mutual interests of our citizens. And as a fan of Korean culture and Korean barbeque, I'm also very much looking forward to lunch—[*laughter*]—that we'll be having in a few minutes. So thank you very much. *Kamsahamnida*. All right.

North Korea/South Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Q. First of all, Mr. President—yes, KBS, Mr. Lee—[*inaudible*]—from KBS. First of all, welcome to Korea, Mr. President. A question going out to President Lee regarding North Korean nuclear issue: Do you envisage any timeline between Korea and the United States in order to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue? Do you have any deadlines about it? And also, regarding the grand bargain proposal that you proposed to North Korea, how do you think that the North Koreans will react to your grand bargain proposal?

And you—both of you mentioned during—the result of your talks, but what kind of things did you discuss regarding the KORUS FTA?

A question going out to President Obama on the KORUS FTA: The KORUS FTA is regarded here within Korea as something that will further strengthen bilateral relationship between Korea and the United States, and many Korean people are hopeful, or hoping for the early ratification of the KORUS FTA. And I would just like to ask, Mr. President, of your strategic vision regarding the KORUS FTA. And as for the grand bargain proposal, I would just like to ask you, how much do you intend to cooperate with the South Koreans in implementing this?

President Lee. I think we promised to ask one question to one leader, but I think you're asking many questions all at once. First of all, on North Korea nuclear issue and convincing North Korea to give up their nuclear weapons program, it is not a simple matter. We know that for sure. For the last 20 years or so, we've been dealing with the North Koreans and negotiating with the North Koreans. We would take one step forward and two steps back, and that has taken

20 years, and still we do not have a full resolvement of this issue.

Now with President Obama in the White House, we were successful in passing and adopting a U.N. Security Council resolution. International cooperation is perfect, in my opinion, in terms of trying to resolve this issue peacefully, and I think we are entering into a new chapter in bringing this issue to an end.

I do not put any deadline to resolving this North Korean nuclear issue. Of course we would want to resolve this issue as soon as possible because that is critical for ensuring peace and stability of the region and the world. And so this is why I proposed a grand bargain proposal.

And what's important is to really know whether North Korea has genuine intent to give up fully and verifiably their nuclear weapons program. And we must find out the intention of the North Koreans, and as soon as we find out, the better it is. And the negotiations to convince North Korea to resolve their nuclear weapons issue, like I said, it is not going to be easy, but I believe it is possible that we can resolve this issue peacefully. So together with President Obama and the international community, we will work to resolve this issue.

About the grand bargain, the North Koreans haven't yet conveyed what they thought of the grand bargain, but in order for the North Koreans to ensure their stability, to improve the lives of the North Korean population, to have economic prosperity, in short, for a better future for the North Koreans, it is my wish that the North Koreans will adopt the grand bargain proposal.

And as for the KORUS FTA, I'm sure President Obama will be making a comment, so I'll just listen.

President Obama. Well, first of all, with respect to North Korea, there's going to be extraordinarily close coordination between our two countries, as there has been for many years.

The thing I want to emphasize is that President Lee and I both agree on the need to break the pattern that has existed in the past in which North Korea behaves in a provocative fashion; it then is willing to return to talks; it talks for a while and then leaves the talks seeking further concessions, and there's never actually any progress on the core issues.

I think President Lee is exactly right, and my administration is taking the same approach, which is, the door is open to resolving these issues peacefully, for North Korea to see over time the reduction of sanctions and its increasing integration into the international community, something that will be good for its people, but it will only happen if North Korea is taking serious steps around the nuclear issue. And we will not be distracted by a whole host of other side items that end up generating a lot of meetings but not concrete action.

Now, with respect to the free trade agreement, I am a strong believer that both countries can benefit from expanding our trade ties. And so I have told President Lee and his team that I am committed to seeing the two countries work together to move this agreement forward. There are still issues that are being discussed and worked on, and we have put our teams in place to make sure that we are covering all the issues that might be a barrier to final ratification of the agreement.

With respect to the United States, I think it's important to understand—and I shared this with President Lee—that American companies and workers are very confident in our ability to compete, and we recognize that there's not only a economic but also a strategic interest in expanding our ties to South Korea. There is obviously also a concern within the United States around the incredible trade imbalances that have grown over the last several decades. Those imbalances are not as prominent with Korea, but there has been a tendency, I think, to lump all of Asia together when Congress looks at trade agreements and says, it appears as if this is a one-way street.

And one of my goals is to make sure that as we work through these issues, that the American people, American businesses, American workers recognize that we have to look at each agreement and each country on its own merits, and make sure that we can create the kind of win-win situation that I know President Lee is interested in seeing as well. Okay?

I think that we've got a question. Julianna [Julianna Goldman, Bloomberg News].

Q. Thank you, Mr. President and President Lee.

President Obama. Oops, I'm sorry.

Iran/South Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, President Lee. President Obama, it appears that Iran has rejected the international offer on its nuclear problem. What are the severe consequences that you've threatened, and when will we see them?

And for President Lee, are you willing to open up your market to U.S. automobiles to get the Korean free trade agreement moving again?

President Obama. With respect to Iran, at the beginning of my administration, we put in place a policy that we have executed as drawn up over the last several months. What we said was that we would take a new approach and say to Iran that we are willing to engage them directly; that we would organize the international community around a series of proposals that would permit Iran to show its intentions to give up any nuclear weapon programs and pursue peaceful nuclear energy under the framework of a nonproliferation regime; that even as we were organizing the international community to put forward a fair deal to the Iranians, that we would also move on a dual track; and that we weren't going to duplicate what has happened with North Korea, in which talks just continue forever without any actual resolution to the issue, so that we indicated that our offer would be on the table for a certain period of time, and that when that time ran out, we would look at other approaches that would increase pressure on Iran to give up its nuclear weapons program.

Since that time, through the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency, as well as the P–5-plus-1, we put forward such a proposal, one in which low-enriched uranium could be removed from Iran, processed outside of Iran, returned to them in a way that couldn't be weaponized and used for research purposes.

The fairness of the deal, I think, is confirmed by the fact that Russia, China, the other members of the P–5-plus-1, as well as Mohamed ElBaredei, the Secretary General of the IAEA, all confirmed that this was a smart, creative proposal that could lead to a path in which Iran was no longer in breach of its international agreements, and that Iran should accept them.

Iran has taken weeks now and has not shown its willingness to say yes to this proposal. And I have not seen the report that you're referring to today, but we've seen indications that, whether it's for internal political reasons or because they are stuck in some of their own rhetoric, they have been unable to get to yes.

And so as a consequence, we have begun discussions with our international partners about the importance of having consequences, that the dual-track approach requires Iran to get a clear message that when it fails to take advantage of these opportunities, that in fact it is not making itself more secure, it's making itself less secure. And our expectation is, is that over the next several weeks, we will be developing a package of potential steps that we could take that will indicate our seriousness to Iran.

I continue to hold out the prospect that they may decide to walk through this door. I hope they do. But what I'm pleased about is the extraordinary international unity that we've seen. If you think at the beginning of the year how disjointed international efforts were and how uneven perceptions were about Iran's nuclear program and where we are today, I think it's an indication that we've taken the right approach.

President Lee. With regards to automobile, in principle, I believe in free trade, and I believe that the international community must strengthen free trade. For the last two decades or so, I think free trade and the movement of goods and services was the driving force behind the development and economic prosperity that we enjoy today.

But at the same time, I also believe that the global economy should grow in a more sustained and balanced way as well. If there are any imbalances between two economies, it should be corrected. And this is a topic and an agenda that is being discussed within the G–20 forum, and this is something that President Obama and I talked about as well.

For me, Korea and the United States, the facts are clear: Trade imbalances between our two countries is not great. I think it is safe to say

that we have almost a balanced account between Korea and the United States. Of course when Korea was a closed economy with protectionist measures, there were some trade imbalances. But compared to countries like China and Japan, the trade imbalances between our two countries is very miniscule.

And President Obama, as he mentioned in his brief remarks just now, he said that all different economies should be judged on their own merits, and free trade agreements is not an exception. And he and I had very candid and frank discussions and forward-looking discussions between us today during the meeting on the—how to move the KORUS FTA forward. And I very much appreciate President Obama for engaging in such discussions.

In the United States, I think, there is a misperception that KORUS FTA, once it is passed, that it is somehow going to only benefit Korea and be detrimental to American consumers, which is not true. Of course there are economic perspectives to take into consideration, but there are also a much bigger strategic perspective to this. And I believe overall this is beneficial for both Korea and the United States.

Of course each industry will be impacted differently. Here in Korea, the service sector, the agricultural sector, they are completely against the passage of the KORUS FTA because they lag far behind their American counterparts. But for us, the Korean Government, we view the KORUS FTA in a more comprehensive manner. Overall, it is beneficial for us in the long term.

If there is any problems in the automobile sector, like you asked, then we are ready to resolve this issue. There are other automobile manufacturers, like in the Europeans. I mean that, as we all know, they produce a tremendous number of automobiles, and we have a free trade agreement with the 27-member European Union, and we have an agreement which has been signed. And we are engaging more and more with our European partners.

And so I think we should have more opportunities to talk about these issues with each other. And on this issue, President Obama and I talked about, in detail, again, how to move forward this agreement. I believe that, again, this is beneficial for both Korea and the United States.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:35 p.m. at Blue House. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Yu Myung-hwan and Minister of National Defense Kim Tae-young of South Korea; and Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen W. Bosworth. President Lee and a reporter spoke in Korean, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 25.

Remarks at the Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation Ceremony
November 25, 2009

All right. Happy Thanksgiving, everybody. Welcome to the White House. On behalf of Sasha and Malia and myself, we're thrilled to see you. I want to thank Walter Pelletier, chairman of the National Turkey Federation, and Joel Brandenberger, its president, for donating this year's turkey. His name is Courage. He traveled here from Goldsboro, North Carolina, where he was raised under Walter's own precious care.

[*At this point, the turkey gobbled.*]

There you go—[*laughter*]—Walter.

Now, the National Turkey Federation has been bringing its finest turkeys to the White House for more than 50 years. I'm told President Eisenhower and Johnson actually ate their turkeys. [*Laughter*] You can't fault them for that; that's a good-looking bird [*Laughter*] President Kennedy was even given a turkey with a sign around its neck that said, "Good eatin', Mr. President." But he showed mercy, and he said, "Let's keep him going." And 20 years ago this Thanksgiving, the first President

Bush issued the first official Presidential pardon for a turkey.

Now, today I am pleased to announce that thanks to the interventions of Malia and Sasha—because I was planning to eat this sucker—[*laughter*]—Courage will also be spared this terrible and delicious fate. [*Laughter*] Later today, he'll head to Disneyland, where he'll be grand marshal of tomorrow's parade. And just in case Courage can't fulfill his responsibilities, Walter brought along another turkey, Carolina, as an alternate, the stand-in.

Now, later this afternoon, Michelle, Malia, Sasha, and I will take two of their less fortunate brethren to Martha's Table, an organization that does extraordinary work to help folks here in DC who need it the most. And I want to thank Jaindl's Turkey Farm in Orefield, Pennsylvania, for donating those dressed birds for dinner. So today, all told, I believe it's fair to say that we have saved or created four turkeys. [*Laughter*]

You know, there are certain days that remind me of why I ran for this office. And then there are moments like this—[*laughter*]—where I pardon a turkey and send it to Disneyland. [*Laughter*] But every single day, I am thankful for the extraordinary responsibility that the American people have placed in me. I am humbled by the privilege that it is to serve them and the tremendous honor it is to serve as Commander in Chief of the finest military in the world, and I want to wish a happy Thanksgiving to every servicemember at home or in harm's way. We're proud of you, and we are thinking of you, and we're praying for you.

When my family and I sit around the table tomorrow, just like millions of other families across America, we'll take time to give our thanks for many blessings. But we'll also remember this is a time when so many members of our American family are hurting. There's no question this has been a tough year for America. We're at war. Our economy is emerging from an extraordinary recession into recovery. But there's a long way to go and a lot of work to do.

In more tranquil times, it's easy to notice our many blessings. It's even easier to take them for granted. But in times like these, they resonate a bit more powerfully. When President Lincoln set aside the National Day of Thanksgiving for the first time, to celebrate America's "fruitful fields," "healthful skies," and the "strength and vigor" of the American people, it was in the midst of the Civil War, just when the future of our very Union was most in doubt. So think about that. When times were darkest, President Lincoln understood that our American blessings shined brighter than ever.

This is an era of new perils and new hardships. But we are, as ever, a people of endless compassion, boundless ingenuity, limitless strength. We're the heirs to a hard-earned history and stewards of a land of God-given beauty. We are Americans. And for all this, we give our humble thanks to our predecessors, to one another, and to God.

So on this quintessentially American holiday, as we give thanks for what we've got, let's also give back to those who are less fortunate. As we give thanks for our loved ones, let us remember those who can't be with us. And as we give thanks for our security, let's in turn thank those who've sacrificed to make it possible, wherever they may be.

Now, before this turkey gets too nervous that Bo will escape and screw up this pardon—[*laughter*]—or before I change my mind, I hereby pardon Courage so that he can live out the rest of his days in peace and tranquility in Disneyland.

And to every American, I want to wish you, on behalf of myself, Malia, Sasha, and Michelle, the happiest of Thanksgivings. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:41 a.m. on the North Portico at the White House.

Statement on Native American Heritage Day
November 25, 2009

Tomorrow, Americans everywhere will observe our National Day of Thanksgiving. It will be a time of celebration and reflection as we gather with family and friends to count our

blessings and remember those less fortunate. But it will also be a time to remember how this holiday began, as a harvest celebration between European settlers and the American Indians who had been living and thriving on the continent for thousands of years.

That is why on Friday, I encourage every American to join me in observing Native American Heritage Day. My administration is committed to strengthening the nation-to-nation relationship with tribal governments. But it is also important for all of us to understand the rich culture, tradition, and history of Native Americans and their status today, and to appreciate the contributions that First Americans have made, and will continue to make to our Nation.

NOTE: The related National Native American Heritage Month proclamation of October 30 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on Albanian Independence Day
November 25, 2009

I send my warmest wishes to all those who will celebrate Albanian Independence Day on Saturday. Here in America, those that can trace their roots to Albania are an important part of this Nation. Abroad, I hope for continued friendship and strengthened ties between our two countries.

Statement on Bosnia and Herzegovina National Day
November 25, 2009

On behalf of the American people, I extend my best wishes to all those who are celebrating the National Day of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Our Nation stands with Bosnia and Herzegovina as it continues its journey from a war-torn past to a peaceful and stable future. I especially offer my congratulations to those in America that can trace their origins back to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Statement on the Death of Abe Pollin
November 25, 2009

Michelle and I were deeply saddened to hear about the passing of Abe Pollin, a giant in the world of professional sports and someone I was proud to call a friend.

Abe was a man who knew that being an owner wasn't just about winning championships, although his teams had plenty of success. It was about helping young athletes become good people as well as good players. And it was about being part of a community. Abe believed in Washington, DC, when many others didn't, putting his own fortune on the line to help revitalize the city he loved. He was committed to the teams he guided, generous to those who needed it most, and as loyal to the people of DC as they were to him.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Irene, his sons Robert and James, and the entire Pollin family.

Statement on the Hajj and Eid al-Adha
November 25, 2009

Michelle and I would like to send our best wishes to all those performing Hajj this year, and to Muslims in America and around the world who are celebrating Eid al-Adha. The

rituals of Hajj and Eid al-Adha both serve as reminders of the shared Abrahamic roots of three of the world's major religions.

During Hajj, the world's largest and most diverse gathering, 3 million Muslims from all walks of life, including thousands of American Muslims, will stand in prayer on Mount Arafat. The following day, Muslims around the world will celebrate Eid al-Adha and distribute food to the less fortunate to commemorate Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son out of obedience to God.

This year, I am pleased that the Department of Health and Human Services has partnered with the Saudi Health Ministry to prevent and limit the spread of H1N1 during Hajj. Cooperating on combating H1N1 is one of the ways we are implementing my administration's commitment to partnership in areas of mutual interest.

On behalf of the American people, we would like to extend our greetings during this Hajj season. *Eid Mubarak*.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released Arabic, Persian, Dari, Urdu, Pashto, Russian, and French language versions of this statement.

The President's Weekly Address
November 26, 2009

For centuries, in peace and in war, in prosperity and in adversity, Americans have paused at this time of year to gather with loved ones and give thanks for life's blessings. This week we carry on this distinctly American tradition. All across our country, folks are coming together to spend time with family, to catch up with old friends, to cook and enjoy a big dinner, and maybe to watch a little football in between.

As always, we give thanks for the kindness of loved ones, for the joys of the previous year, and for the pride we feel in our communities and country. We keep in our thoughts and prayers the many families marking this Thanksgiving with an empty seat saved for a son or daughter, a husband or wife stationed in harm's way. And we say a special thanks for the sacrifices those men and women in uniform are making for our safety and freedom and for all those Americans who enrich the lives of our communities through acts of kindness and generosity and service.

But as much as we all have to be thankful for, we also know that this year millions of Americans are facing very difficult economic times. Many have lost jobs in this recession, the worst in generations. Many more are struggling to afford health care premiums and house payments, let alone to save for an education or retirement. Too many are wondering if the dream of a middle class life—that American Dream—is slipping away. It's the worry I hear from folks across the country, good, hard-working people doing the best they can for their families but fearing that their best just isn't good enough. These aren't strangers. They're our family, our friends, and our neighbors. Their struggles must be our concern.

That's why we passed the Recovery Act that cut taxes for 95 percent of working people and for small businesses and that extended unemployment benefits and health coverage for millions of Americans who lost their jobs in this turmoil. That's why we are reforming the health care system so that middle class families have affordable insurance that cannot be denied because of a preexisting condition or taken away because you happen to get sick. We've worked to stem the tide of foreclosures and stopped the decline in home values. We're making it easier to save for retirement and more affordable to send a son or daughter to college.

The investments we've made and tough steps we've taken have helped break the back of the recession, and now our economy is finally growing again. But as I said when I took office, job recovery from this crisis will not come easily or quickly. Though the job losses we were experiencing earlier this year have slowed dramatically, we're still not creating enough new jobs each month to make up for the ones we're losing. And no matter what the economists say, for families and communities across this country,

this recession will not end until we completely turn that tide.

So we've made progress, but we can't rest. And my administration will not rest, until we've revived this economy and rebuilt it stronger than before, until we're creating jobs and opportunities for middle class families, until we have moved beyond the cycles of boom and bust, of reckless risk and speculation, that led us to so much crisis and pain these past few years.

Next week, I'll be meeting with owners of large and small businesses, labor leaders, and non-for-profit leaders from across the country to talk about the additional steps we can take to help spur job creation. I'll work with the Congress to enact those proposals quickly. And it's my fervent hope and my heartfelt expectation that next Thanksgiving we will be able to celebrate the fact that many of those who have lost their jobs are back at work and that as a nation we will have come through these difficult storms stronger and wiser and grateful to have reached a brighter day.

Thank you, God bless you, and from my family to yours, happy Thanksgiving.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 1:30 p.m. on November 25 at the White House for broadcast on November 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 25, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on November 26.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting an Alternative Plan for Pay Increases for Civilian Federal Employees
November 30, 2009

Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am transmitting an alternative plan for locality pay increases for civilian Federal employees covered by the General Schedule (GS) and certain other pay systems in January 2010.

Under title 5, United States Code, civilian Federal employees covered by the GS and certain other pay systems would receive a two-part pay increase in January 2010: (1) a 2.4 percent across-the-board adjustment in scheduled rates of basic pay derived from Employment Cost Index data on changes in the wages and salaries of private industry workers, and (2) locality pay adjustments averaging 16.5 percent based on Bureau of Labor Statistics salary surveys of non-Federal employers in each locality pay area. According to the statutory formula, for Federal employees covered by the locality pay system, the overall average pay increase would be about 18.9 percent. This total Federal employee pay increase would cost about $22.6 billion in fiscal year 2010 alone.

Title 5, United States Code, authorizes me to implement an alternative pay plan if I view the adjustments that would otherwise take effect as inappropriate due to "national emergency or serious economic conditions affecting the general welfare." As in August, when I submitted an alternative plan under 5 U.S.C. 5303(b) to limit the across-the-board increase in 2010 to 2.0 percent, I have determined that it is appropriate to exercise my statutory alternative plan authority under 5 U.S.C. 5304a to set alternative January 2010 locality pay rates.

A national emergency, within the meaning of chapter 53 of title 5, has existed since September 11, 2001. Likewise, our country continues to face serious economic conditions affecting the general welfare and most Americans would not understand or accept that Federal employees should receive an average pay increase of 18.9 percent while many of their fellow citizens are facing employment cutbacks or unemployment. Such an increase would cost $19.9 billion more than the 2.0 percent overall Federal civilian pay increase that I proposed in my 2010 Budget and would build in later years.

Accordingly, I have determined that under the authority of section 5304a of title 5, United States Code, the locality pay percentages

currently in effect as shown in the attachment shall remain in effect in 2010.

The law requires that I include in this report an assessment of the impact of my decision on the Government's ability to recruit and retain well-qualified employees. As I said in August, I do not believe this decision will materially affect our ability to continue to attract and retain a quality Federal workforce. Since any pay raise above the amount proposed in this alternative plan would likely be unfunded, agencies would have to absorb the additional cost and could have to reduce hiring to pay the higher rates. Moreover, the GS "quit" rate continues to be very low (2.1 percent on an annual basis), well below the overall average "quit" rate in private enterprise.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President of the Senate.

Statement on Romanian National Day
December 1, 2009

I send my best wishes to all those who will celebrate Romanian National Day. Our nations share nearly 130 years of relations, and Romania remains a close ally and partner as we face the challenges of the world. I especially offer my congratulations to the Romanian American community that are observing this occasion.

Statement on Central African Republic National Day
December 1, 2009

On behalf of the American people, I extend my best wishes to all those who are celebrating the National Day of the Central African Republic. Our Nation stands with the Central African Republic as both our countries work together to promote peace and prosperity.

Remarks at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York
December 1, 2009

Thank you. Please be seated. Good evening. To the United States Corps of Cadets, to the men and women of our Armed Services, and to my fellow Americans: I want to speak to you tonight about our effort in Afghanistan, the nature of our commitment there, the scope of our interests, and the strategy that my administration will pursue to bring this war to a successful conclusion. It's an extraordinary honor for me to do so here at West Point, where so many men and women have prepared to stand up for our security and to represent what is finest about our country.

To address these important issues, it's important to recall why America and our allies were compelled to fight a war in Afghanistan in the first place. We did not ask for this fight. On September 11th, 2001, 19 men hijacked 4 airplanes and used them to murder nearly 3,000 people. They struck at our military and economic nerve centers. They took the lives of innocent men, women, and children without regard to their faith or race or station. Were it not for the heroic actions of passengers onboard one of these flights, they could have also struck at one of the great symbols of our democracy in Washington and killed many more.

As we know, these men belonged to Al Qaida, a group of extremists who have distorted and defiled Islam, one of the world's great religions, to justify the slaughter of innocents. Al Qaida's base of operations was in Afghanistan,

where they were harbored by the Taliban, a ruthless, repressive, and radical movement that seized control of that country after it was ravaged by years of Soviet occupation and civil war and after the attention of America and our friends had turned elsewhere.

Just days after 9/11, Congress authorized the use of force against Al Qaida and those who harbored them, an authorization that continues to this day. The vote in the Senate was 98 to nothing; the vote in the House was 420 to 1. For the first time in its history, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization invoked Article 5, the commitment that says an attack on one member nation is an attack on all. And the United Nations Security Council endorsed the use of all necessary steps to respond to the 9/11 attacks. America, our allies, and the world were acting as one to destroy Al Qaida's terrorist network and to protect our common security.

Under the banner of this domestic unity and international legitimacy—and only after the Taliban refused to turn over Usama bin Laden—we sent our troops into Afghanistan. Within a matter of months, Al Qaida was scattered and many of its operatives were killed. The Taliban was driven from power and pushed back on its heels. A place that had known decades of fear now had reason to hope. At a conference convened by the U.N., a Provisional Government was established under President Hamid Karzai, and an International Security Assistance Force was established to help bring a lasting peace to a war-torn country.

Then, in early 2003, the decision was made to wage a second war, in Iraq. The wrenching debate over the Iraq war is well known and need not be repeated here. It's enough to say that for the next 6 years, the Iraq war drew the dominant share of our troops, our resources, our diplomacy, and our national attention, and that the decision to go into Iraq caused substantial rifts between America and much of the world.

Today, after extraordinary costs, we are bringing the Iraq war to a responsible end. We will remove our combat brigades from Iraq by the end of next summer and all of our troops by the end of 2011. That we are doing so is a testament to the character of the men and women in uniform. Thanks to their courage, grit, and perseverance, we have given Iraqis a chance to shape their future, and we are successfully leaving Iraq to its people.

But while we've achieved hard-earned milestones in Iraq, the situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated. After escaping across the border into Pakistan in 2001 and 2002, Al Qaida's leadership established a safe haven there. Although a legitimate Government was elected by the Afghan people, it's been hampered by corruption, the drug trade, an underdeveloped economy, and insufficient security forces.

Over the last several years, the Taliban has maintained common cause with Al Qaida, as they both seek an overthrow of the Afghan Government. Gradually, the Taliban has begun to control additional swaths of territory in Afghanistan, while engaging in increasingly brazen and devastating attacks of terrorism against the Pakistani people.

Now, throughout this period, our troop levels in Afghanistan remained a fraction of what they were in Iraq. When I took office, we had just over 32,000 Americans serving in Afghanistan, compared to 160,000 in Iraq at the peak of the war. Commanders in Afghanistan repeatedly asked for support to deal with the reemergence of the Taliban, but these reinforcements did not arrive. And that's why, shortly after taking office, I approved a longstanding request for more troops. After consultations with our allies, I then announced a strategy recognizing the fundamental connection between our war effort in Afghanistan and the extremist safe havens in Pakistan. I set a goal that was narrowly defined as disrupting, dismantling, and defeating Al Qaida and its extremist allies, and pledged to better coordinate our military and civilian efforts.

Since then, we've made progress on some important objectives. High-ranking Al Qaida and Taliban leaders have been killed, and we've stepped up the pressure on Al Qaida worldwide. In Pakistan, that nation's army has gone on its largest offensive in years. In Afghanistan, we and our allies prevented the Taliban from stopping a Presidential election, and

although it was marred by fraud, that election produced a Government that is consistent with Afghanistan's laws and Constitution.

Yet huge challenges remain. Afghanistan is not lost, but for several years, it has moved backwards. There's no imminent threat of the Government being overthrown, but the Taliban has gained momentum. Al Qaida has not reemerged in Afghanistan in the same numbers as before 9/11, but they retain their safe havens along the border. And our forces lack the full support they need to effectively train and partner with Afghan security forces and better secure the population. Our new commander in Afghanistan, General McChrystal, has reported that the security situation is more serious than he anticipated. In short, the status quo is not sustainable.

As cadets, you volunteered for service during this time of danger. Some of you fought in Afghanistan. Some of you will deploy there. As your Commander in Chief, I owe you a mission that is clearly defined and worthy of your service. And that's why, after the Afghan voting was completed, I insisted on a thorough review of our strategy. Now, let me be clear: There has never been an option before me that called for troop deployments before 2010, so there has been no delay or denial of resources necessary for the conduct of the war during this review period. Instead, the review has allowed me to ask the hard questions and to explore all the different options, along with my national security team, our military and civilian leadership in Afghanistan, and our key partners. And given the stakes involved, I owed the American people and our troops no less.

This review is now complete. And as Commander in Chief, I have determined that it is in our vital national interest to send an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan. After 18 months, our troops will begin to come home. These are the resources that we need to seize the initiative, while building the Afghan capacity that can allow for a responsible transition of our forces out of Afghanistan.

I do not make this decision lightly. I opposed the war in Iraq precisely because I believe that we must exercise restraint in the use of military force and always consider the long-term consequences of our actions. We have been at war now for 8 years, at enormous cost in lives and resources. Years of debate over Iraq and terrorism have left our unity on national security issues in tatters and created a highly polarized and partisan backdrop for this effort. And having just experienced the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, the American people are understandably focused on rebuilding our economy and putting people to work here at home.

Most of all, I know that this decision asks even more of you, a military that, along with your families, has already borne the heaviest of all burdens. As President, I have signed a letter of condolence to the family of each American who gives their life in these wars. I have read the letters from the parents and spouses of those who deployed. I've visited our courageous wounded warriors at Walter Reed. I've traveled to Dover to meet the flag-draped caskets of 18 Americans returning home to their final resting place. I see firsthand the terrible wages of war. If I did not think that the security of the United States and the safety of the American people were at stake in Afghanistan, I would gladly order every single one of our troops home tomorrow.

So no, I do not make this decision lightly. I make this decision because I am convinced that our security is at stake in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is the epicenter of violent extremism practiced by Al Qaida. It is from here that we were attacked on 9/11, and it is from here that new attacks are being plotted as I speak. This is no idle danger, no hypothetical threat. In the last few months alone, we have apprehended extremists within our borders who were sent here from the border region of Afghanistan and Pakistan to commit new acts of terror. And this danger will only grow if the region slides backwards and Al Qaida can operate with impunity. We must keep the pressure on Al Qaida, and to do that, we must increase the stability and capacity of our partners in the region.

Of course, this burden is not ours alone to bear. This is not just America's war. Since 9/11, Al Qaida's safe havens have been the source of attacks against London and Amman and Bali. The people and Governments of both Afghanistan

and Pakistan are endangered. And the stakes are even higher within a nuclear-armed Pakistan, because we know that Al Qaida and other extremists seek nuclear weapons, and we have every reason to believe that they would use them.

These facts compel us to act, along with our friends and allies. Our overarching goal remains the same: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida in Afghanistan and Pakistan and to prevent its capacity to threaten America and our allies in the future.

To meet that goal, we will pursue the following objectives within Afghanistan. We must deny Al Qaida a safe haven. We must reverse the Taliban's momentum and deny it the ability to overthrow the Government. And we must strengthen the capacity of Afghanistan's security forces and Government so that they can take lead responsibility for Afghanistan's future.

We will meet these objectives in three ways. First, we will pursue a military strategy that will break the Taliban's momentum and increase Afghanistan's capacity over the next 18 months.

The 30,000 additional troops that I'm announcing tonight will deploy in the first part of 2010—the fastest possible pace—so that they can target the insurgency and secure key population centers. They'll increase our ability to train competent Afghan security forces and to partner with them so that more Afghans can get into the fight. And they will help create the conditions for the United States to transfer responsibility to the Afghans.

Because this is an international effort, I've asked that our commitment be joined by contributions from our allies. Some have already provided additional troops, and we're confident that there will be further contributions in the days and weeks ahead. Our friends have fought and bled and died alongside us in Afghanistan. And now we must come together to end this war successfully, for what's at stake is not simply a test of NATO's credibility, what's at stake is the security of our allies and the common security of the world.

Now, taken together, these additional American and international troops will allow us to accelerate handing over responsibility to Afghan forces and allow us to begin the transfer of our forces out of Afghanistan in July of 2011. Just as we have done in Iraq, we will execute this transition responsibly, taking into account conditions on the ground. We'll continue to advise and assist Afghanistan's security forces to ensure that they can succeed over the long haul. But it will be clear to the Afghan Government and, more importantly, to the Afghan people that they will ultimately be responsible for their own country.

Second, we will work with our partners, the United Nations, and the Afghan people to pursue a more effective civilian strategy so that the Government can take advantage of improved security. This effort must be based on performance. The days of providing a blank check are over. President Karzai's inauguration speech sent the right message about moving in a new direction. And going forward, we will be clear about what we expect from those who receive our assistance. We'll support Afghan ministries, Governors, and local leaders that combat corruption and deliver for the people. We expect those who are ineffective or corrupt to be held accountable. And we will also focus our assistance in areas such as agriculture that can make an immediate impact in the lives of the Afghan people.

The people of Afghanistan have endured violence for decades. They've been confronted with occupation by the Soviet Union and then by foreign Al Qaida fighters who used Afghan land for their own purposes. So tonight I want the Afghan people to understand: America seeks an end to this era of war and suffering. We have no interest in occupying your country. We will support efforts by the Afghan Government to open the door to those Taliban who abandon violence and respect the human rights of their fellow citizens. And we will seek a partnership with Afghanistan, grounded in mutual respect, to isolate those who destroy, to strengthen those who build, to hasten the day when our troops will leave, and to forge a lasting friendship in which America is your partner and never your patron.

Third, we will act with the full recognition that our success in Afghanistan is inextricably

linked to our partnership with Pakistan. We're in Afghanistan to prevent a cancer from once again spreading through that country. But this same cancer has also taken root in the border region of Pakistan. And that's why we need a strategy that works on both sides of the border.

In the past, there have been those in Pakistan who've argued that the struggle against extremism is not their fight and that Pakistan is better off doing little or seeking accommodation with those who use violence. But in recent years, as innocents have been killed from Karachi to Islamabad, it has become clear that it is the Pakistani people who are the most endangered by extremism. Public opinion has turned. The Pakistani Army has waged an offensive in Swat and South Waziristan. And there is no doubt that the United States and Pakistan share a common enemy.

In the past, we too often defined our relationship with Pakistan narrowly, and those days are over. Moving forward, we are committed to a partnership with Pakistan that is built on a foundation of mutual interest, mutual respect, and mutual trust. We will strengthen Pakistan's capacity to target those groups that threaten our countries and have made it clear that we cannot tolerate a safe haven for terrorists whose location is known and whose intentions are clear. America is also providing substantial resources to support Pakistan's democracy and development. We are the largest international supporter for those Pakistanis displaced by the fighting. And going forward, the Pakistan people must know America will remain a strong supporter of Pakistan's security and prosperity long after the guns have fallen silent so that the great potential of its people can be unleashed.

These are the three core elements of our strategy: a military effort to create the conditions for a transition, a civilian surge that reinforces positive action, and an effective partnership with Pakistan.

I recognize there are a range of concerns about our approach. So let me briefly address a few of the more prominent arguments that I've heard and which I take very seriously.

First, there are those who suggest that Afghanistan is another Vietnam. They argue that it cannot be stabilized and we're better off cutting our losses and rapidly withdrawing. I believe this argument depends on a false reading of history. Unlike Vietnam, we are joined by a broad coalition of 43 nations that recognizes the legitimacy of our action. Unlike Vietnam, we are not facing a broad-based popular insurgency. And most importantly, unlike Vietnam, the American people were viciously attacked from Afghanistan and remain a target for those same extremists who are plotting along its border. To abandon this area now and to rely only on efforts against Al Qaida from a distance would significantly hamper our ability to keep the pressure on Al Qaida and create an unacceptable risk of additional attacks on our homeland and our allies.

Second, there are those who acknowledge that we can't leave Afghanistan in its current state, but suggest that we go forward with the troops that we already have. But this would simply maintain a status quo in which we muddle through and permit a slow deterioration of conditions there. It would ultimately prove more costly and prolong our stay in Afghanistan, because we would never be able to generate the conditions needed to train Afghan security forces and give them the space to take over.

Finally, there are those who oppose identifying a timeframe for our transition to Afghan responsibility. Indeed, some call for a more dramatic and open-ended escalation of our war effort, one that would commit us to a nation-building project of up to a decade. I reject this course because it sets goals that are beyond what can be achieved at a reasonable cost and what we need to achieve to secure our interests. Furthermore, the absence of a timeframe for transition would deny us any sense of urgency in working with the Afghan Government. It must be clear that Afghans will have to take responsibility for their security and that America has no interest in fighting an endless war in Afghanistan.

As President, I refuse to set goals that go beyond our responsibility, our means, or our interests. And I must weigh all of the challenges that our Nation faces. I don't have the luxury of committing to just one. Indeed, I'm mindful of the words of President Eisenhower, who, in discussing our national security, said, "Each

proposal must be weighed in the light of a broader consideration: the need to maintain balance in and among national programs."

Over the past several years, we have lost that balance. We've failed to appreciate the connection between our national security and our economy. In the wake of an economic crisis, too many of our neighbors and friends are out of work and struggle to pay the bills. Too many Americans are worried about the future facing our children. Meanwhile, competition within the global economy has grown more fierce. So we can't simply afford to ignore the price of these wars.

All told, by the time I took office, the cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan approached a trillion dollars. And going forward, I am committed to addressing these costs openly and honestly. Our new approach in Afghanistan is likely to cost us roughly $30 billion for the military this year, and I'll work closely with Congress to address these costs as we work to bring down our deficit.

But as we end the war in Iraq and transition to Afghan responsibility, we must rebuild our strength here at home. Our prosperity provides a foundation for our power. It pays for our military. It underwrites our diplomacy. It taps the potential of our people and allows investment in new industry. And it will allow us to compete in this century as successfully as we did in the last. That's why our troop commitment in Afghanistan cannot be open ended, because the nation that I'm most interested in building is our own.

Now, let me be clear: None of this will be easy. The struggle against violent extremism will not be finished quickly, and it extends well beyond Afghanistan and Pakistan. It will be an enduring test of our free society and our leadership in the world. And unlike the great power conflicts and clear lines of division that defined the 20th century, our effort will involve disorderly regions, failed states, diffuse enemies.

So as a result, America will have to show our strength in the way that we end wars and prevent conflict, not just how we wage wars. We'll have to be nimble and precise in our use of military power. Where Al Qaida and its allies attempt to establish a foothold, whether in Somalia or Yemen or elsewhere, they must be confronted by growing pressure and strong partnerships.

And we can't count on military might alone. We have to invest in our homeland security, because we can't capture or kill every violent extremist abroad. We have to improve and better coordinate our intelligence so that we stay one step ahead of shadowy networks.

We will have to take away the tools of mass destruction. And that's why I've made it a central pillar of my foreign policy to secure loose nuclear materials from terrorists, to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, and to pursue the goal of a world without them, because every nation must understand that true security will never come from an endless race for evermore destructive weapons; true security will come for those who reject them.

We'll have to use diplomacy, because no one nation can meet the challenges of an interconnected world acting alone. I've spent this year renewing our alliances and forging new partnerships. And we have forged a new beginning between America and the Muslim world, one that recognizes our mutual interest in breaking a cycle of conflict and that promises a future in which those who kill innocents are isolated by those who stand up for peace and prosperity and human dignity.

And finally, we must draw on the strength of our values, for the challenges that we face may have changed, but the things that we believe in must not. That's why we must promote our values by living them at home, which is why I have prohibited torture and will close the prison at Guantanamo Bay. And we must make it clear to every man, woman, and child around the world who lives under the dark cloud of tyranny that America will speak out on behalf of their human rights and tend to the light of freedom and justice and opportunity and respect for the dignity of all peoples. That is who we are. That is the source, the moral source, of America's authority.

Since the days of Franklin Roosevelt and the service and sacrifice of our grandparents and great-grandparents, our country has borne a special burden in global affairs. We have

spilled American blood in many countries on multiple continents. We have spent our revenue to help others rebuild from rubble and develop their own economies. We have joined with others to develop an architecture of institutions—from the United Nations to NATO to the World Bank—that provide for the common security and prosperity of human beings.

We have not always been thanked for these efforts, and we have at times made mistakes. But more than any other nation, the United States of America has underwritten global security for over six decades, a time that, for all its problems, has seen walls come down and markets open and billions lifted from poverty, unparalleled scientific progress and advancing frontiers of human liberty.

For unlike the great powers of old, we have not sought world domination. Our Union was founded in resistance to oppression. We do not seek to occupy other nations. We will not claim another nation's resources or target other peoples because their faith or ethnicity is different from ours. What we have fought for, what we continue to fight for, is a better future for our children and grandchildren. And we believe that their lives will be better if other peoples' children and grandchildren can live in freedom and access opportunity.

As a country, we're not as young, and perhaps not as innocent, as we were when Roosevelt was President. Yet we are still heirs to a noble struggle for freedom. And now we must summon all of our might and moral suasion to meet the challenges of a new age.

In the end, our security and leadership does not come solely from the strength of our arms. It derives from our people: from the workers and businesses who will rebuild our economy; from the entrepreneurs and researchers who will pioneer new industries; from the teachers that will educate our children and the service of those who work in our communities at home; from the diplomats and Peace Corps volunteers who spread hope abroad; and from the men and women in uniform who are part of an unbroken line of sacrifice that has made government of the people, by the people, and for the people a reality on this Earth.

This vast and diverse citizenry will not always agree on every issue, nor should we. But I also know that we, as a country, cannot sustain our leadership, nor navigate the momentous challenges of our time, if we allow ourselves to be split asunder by the same rancor and cynicism and partisanship that has in recent times poisoned our national discourse.

It's easy to forget that when this war began, we were united, bound together by the fresh memory of a horrific attack and by the determination to defend our homeland and the values we hold dear. I refuse to accept the notion that we cannot summon that unity again. I believe with every fiber of my being that we, as Americans, can still come together behind a common purpose. For our values are not simply words written into parchment, they are a creed that calls us together and that has carried us through the darkest of storms as one Nation, as one people.

America, we are passing through a time of great trial. And the message that we send in the midst of these storms must be clear: That our cause is just, our resolve unwavering. We will go forward with the confidence that right makes might and with the commitment to forge an America that is safer, a world that is more secure, and a future that represents not the deepest of fears but the highest of hopes.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:01 p.m. in Eisenhower Hall Theatre. In his remarks, he referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan. The Office of the Press Secretary also released Albanian, Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, Czech, Dari, Estonian, Finnish, French, Georgian, German, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latvian, Pashto, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Slovenian, Turkish, and Urdu language transcripts of these remarks.

Remarks at the Opening Session of the Jobs and Economic Growth Forum
December 3, 2009

Thank you, everybody. Thank you very much. Please, have a seat. Good afternoon, everybody. I'm glad you all could join us today for this job forum here at the White House. Now, we've got leaders from just about every sector of the economy: government, labor, academia, nonprofits, and businesses of all sizes. And I know that your unions or universities or cities or companies don't run themselves, so I appreciate that you've taken the time to be here today. And I appreciate the unique perspective each of you brings to the great economic challenge before us: the continuing plight of millions of Americans who are still out of work.

Sometimes in this town, we talk about these things in clinical and academic ways. But this is not an academic debate. With 1 in 10 Americans out of work and millions more underemployed, not having enough hours to support themselves, this is a struggle that cuts deep, and it touches people across this Nation. Every day, I meet people or I hear from people who talk about sending out resume after resume, and they've been on the job hunt for a year or a year and a half and still can't find anything and are desperate. They haven't just lost the paycheck they need to live; they're losing the sense of dignity and identity that comes from having a job. I hear from businessowners who face the heartbreak of having to lay off longtime employees or shutting their doors altogether, in some cases businesses that they've taken years to build, in some cases businesses that they inherited from their parents or their grandparents. And I see communities devastated by lost jobs and devastated by the fear that those jobs are never coming back.

Now, as Joe mentioned, it's true that we've seen a significant turnaround in the economy overall since the beginning of the year. Our economy was in a freefall. Our financial system was on the verge of collapse. We were losing 700,000 jobs per month. And it was clear then that our first order of business was to keep a recession from slipping into a depression, from preventing financial meltdown and getting the economy growing again, because we knew that without economic growth, there would be little to nothing we could do to stem job losses. And we knew that trying to create jobs in an economy based on inflated home prices and maxed-out credit cards and overleveraged banks was akin to building a house on sand.

So we implemented plans to stabilize the financial system and revive lending to families and businesses. We passed the Recovery Act, which stopped our freefall and help spur the growth that we've seen. Today, our economy is growing again for the first time in a year and at the fastest pace that we've seen in 2 years, and productivity is surging. Companies are reporting profits. The stock market is up.

But despite the progress we've made, many businesses are still skittish about hiring. Some are still digging themselves out of the losses they incurred over the past year. Many have figured out how to squeeze more productivity out of fewer workers, and that cost-cutting has become embedded in their operations and in their culture. That may result in good profits, but it's not translating into hiring. And so that's the question that we have to ask ourselves today: How do we get businesses to start hiring again? How do we get ourselves to the point where more people are working and more people are spending and you start seeing a virtuous cycle and the recovery starts to feed on itself?

Now, we knew from the outset of this recession—particularly a recession of this severity and a recession that is spurred on by financial crisis rather than as a consequence of the business cycle—that it would take time for job growth to catch up with economic growth. We all understood that. That's always been the case with recessions. But we cannot hang back and hope for the best when we've seen the kinds of job losses that we've seen over the last year. I am not interested in taking a wait-and-see approach when it comes to creating jobs.

What I'm interested in is taking action right now to help businesses create jobs—right now,

in the near term. And that's why we made more credit available to small banks that provide loans to small businesses. That's why we provided tax relief to help small businesses stay afloat and proposed raising SBA loan limits to help them expand. That's why we created the Cash for Clunkers program and made sure the Recovery Act included investments that would start saving and creating jobs this year, as Joe mentioned, as many as 1.6 [million]* so far is estimated, according to the most recent analysis. And that's why I've been working continuously with my economic advisers as well as congressional leaders and others on new job creation ideas. And I'll be speaking in greater detail about several ideas that have already surfaced early next week.

But I want to be clear: While I believe that government has a critical role in creating the conditions for economic growth, ultimately, true economic recovery is only going to come from the private sector. We don't have enough public dollars to fill the hole of private dollars that was created as a consequence of the crisis. It is only when the private sector starts to reinvest again, only when our businesses start hiring again and people start spending again and families start seeing improvement in their own lives again that we're going to have the kind of economy that we want. That's the measure of a real economic recovery.

So that's why we've invited all of you here today. Many of you run businesses yourselves. Each of you is an expert on some aspect of job creation. Collectively, your views span the spectrum. That was deliberate. We've looking for fresh perspectives and new ideas.

I want to hear about what unions and universities can do to better support and prepare our workers, not just for the jobs of today, but for the jobs 5 years from now and 10 years from now and 50 years from now. I want to hear about what mayors and community leaders can do to bring new investment to our cities and towns and help recovery dollars get to where they need to go as quickly as possible. I want to hear from CEOs about what's holding back business investment and how we can increase confidence and spur hiring. And if there are things that we're doing here in Washington that are inhibiting you, then we want to know about it.

And I want to continue this conversation outside of Washington, which is why I'll be meeting with some of the small-business owners that you saw in the video, in Allentown, Pennsylvania, tomorrow to get their ideas. It's also why we've asked State and local officials and community organizations to hold their own jobs forums over the next week or so and to report back with the ideas and recommendations that result.

Now, let me be clear: I am open to every demonstrably good idea, and I want to take every responsible step to accelerate job creation. We also, though, have to face the fact that our resources are limited. When we walked in, there was an enormous fiscal gap between the money that is going out and the money coming in. The recession has made that worse because of fewer tax receipts and more demands made on government for things like unemployment insurance.

So we can't make any ill-considered decisions right now, even with the best of intentions. We're going to have to be surgical, and we're going to have to be creative. We're going to have to be smart and strategic. We'll need to look beyond the old standbys and fallbacks and come up with the best ideas that give us the biggest bang for the buck.

So I need everybody here to bring their A-game here today. I'm going to be asking some tough questions. I will be listening for some good answers. And I don't want to just brainstorm up at 30,000 feet. I want details in our discussion today. I'm looking for specific recommendations that can be implemented that will spur on job growth as quickly as possible.

Now, I want to be clear: We won't overcome our unemployment challenge in just a few hours this afternoon. I assure you there is extraordinary skepticism that any discussions like this can actually produce results. I'm well aware of that. I don't mind skepticism. If I listened to the skeptics, I wouldn't be here. [*Laughter*]

* White House correction.

But I am confident that we'll make progress. I'm confident that people like you, who've built thriving businesses or revolutionized industries or brought cities and communities together and changed the way we look at the world and innovated and created new products, that you can come up with some additional good ideas on how to create jobs. And I'm confident that the spirit of bold, persistent experimentation that FDR talked about and that's gotten this country through some of our darkest hours remains alive and well, not just in this room, but all across the country.

We still have the best universities in the world. We've got some of the finest science and technology in the world. We've got the most entrepreneurial spirit in the world, and we've got some of the most productive workers in the world. And if we get serious, then the 21st century is going to be the American century, just like the 20th century was. But we're going to have to approach this with a sense of seriousness and try to set the politics and the chatter aside for a while and actually get to work.

So welcome. Thank you for participating. We are going to maximize the productivity of this effort over the next several hours. And I will be returning back with you so that I can get a report on what kinds of ideas seem to make the most sense. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:42 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., who introduced the President. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included remarks by Vice President Biden.

Remarks at the Closing Session of the Jobs and Economic Growth Forum and a Question-and-Answer Session
December 3, 2009

The President. Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Please be seated. We want to make sure we get in as much discussion as possible in the remaining time that we have. I hope everybody enjoyed the breakout sessions. I had the opportunity to attend two of them for quite some time and enjoyed some terrific conversation and some great ideas.

I heard a great deal of challenges this afternoon about—or a great deal this afternoon about the challenges that we're all facing, for businesses large and small, when it comes to trying to create jobs. There's no question that it is difficult out there right now. But we also heard some exciting ideas and proposals for how we can spur hiring today and lay the groundwork for sustainable economic growth in the future, in other words, ideas that help us in the short term but also point us in the direction of rebuilding the country.

I attended two of the sessions, one on infrastructure, where there was broad agreement that the infrastructure in America is not where it needs to be, and we've got enormous investments to make. We got some good, hard-headed feedback from people like Doug Holtz-Eakin and others about how we have to do this more effectively; how can we measure the costs and benefits of infrastructure investment; how can we make sure that shovel-ready actually means shovel-ready; how can there be more effective coordination between Federal, State, and local governments in order to maximize the benefits of our infrastructure spending. And there was considerable amount of discussion about how we can leverage the private sector to boost our infrastructure spending.

We also heard, in the clean energy session that I just left, some terrific ideas about how weatherization and energy efficiency promises immediate impacts on the ground. We can create new jobs, spur enormous amounts of business opportunities for the clean tech sector, but we're also laying the groundwork for energy independence, and we would also, as a

consequence of having made those investments, set up the prospect that it would pay for itself from ultimate energy savings.

Now, I will tell you that in the green energy discussion, the clean energy discussion, there was also an acknowledgment that we're not going to be able to maximize the benefits of clean energy investment unless we get settled how we're dealing with carbon and the price of carbon. And we don't want to turn this into a discussion about Congress and legislation, but I think there was all—there was some consensus around the table that if we can focus on the enormous business opportunities there, that in fact, America will benefit and will be able to compete in the next great round of economic growth around the world.

I was not in some of the other meetings, but I've gotten a quick summary. My understanding—that in the business investment and tax session, there were some important ideas put forward about how we can provide additional tax incentives for job growth. For example, Bill McComb, CEO of Liz Claiborne, explained the impact of the expanded business tax breaks that I signed into law a few weeks ago. Before the provisions went into effect, he was planning to close 10 stores. Now he's going to save those 10 and open an additional 25. So that's a good news story, but it's also indicative of how our tax policies can make a difference.

Several participants, including Larry Mishel and Alan Blinder, proposed offering additional tax incentives for job creation. And this concept was raised in a number of the other sessions as well, so it's an idea that we think is worthy of further consideration.

In the small-business discussion, Joe Stiglitz, I think, presented an economic case for how credit markets can fail and deny even good borrowers credit, and put forward some specific ideas about how we can get credit moving again. All the reports that we're getting is that if you are a big corporation right now, the credit markets are working for you; if you are a small business, and in some cases a medium-sized business, even if you are profitable, that you're still seeing credit frozen. And we are going to have to unlock that, and that's going to require an interface between what we're doing on the recovery side and what we're doing on financial regulation and our banking policies.

Angie Shelden—Selden, who runs a company called Arise Virtual Solutions, explained—where are you, Angie? There you are. She explained how she's creating thousands of call-in sales jobs, bringing jobs back to the United States that have gone overseas in the last several years. And she had some very specific ideas about how we could foster more of this reverse job migration, which we're going to take a look at.

Which brings us to the exports session. One of the things that, obviously, in a time of fiscal constraint, that we're constantly looking for is how we can spur job growth here in the United States without spending a whole lot of government money. We're going to need to put public dollars in, but where can we find leverage?

I think everybody agrees that expanding our exports has to be a priority. And this was the major topic when I traveled to Asia several weeks ago. During the session, as I understand it, we heard from Jim Hoffa about the importance of trade strategies that open markets. We heard from Boeing CEO Jim McNerney about the 22,000 small-business suppliers that he relies on to make products and underscoring the fact that if these suppliers—these smaller suppliers aren't getting credit, it's very hard for him to build products for export.

Bob Iger, from Disney, and other business leaders talked about how we can make our businesses more competitive, and some specific ideas were protecting intellectual property and tax policies to promote innovation here at home.

Finally, we heard from a broad cross-section of thinkers about the urgent need for more effective worker training. And Randall Stephenson from AT&T talked about a successful partnership with San Antonio community colleges to train workers for jobs that the company is committed to bringing back from India. And I think we all agreed that we should look to build on these kinds of partnerships to leverage the community college system. We heard from our—in our infrastructure session, we heard that same refrain about the need to train workers effectively.

Randi Weingarten of the AFT suggested a specific idea: community schools, especially in rural areas, where parents can get training after hours in the same place where their kids are learning during the day. And I think that's a terrific idea worth exploring.

Let me just close by saying this. What was striking is the overlap that existed in a lot of these sessions. When we were in the clean energy section, there was an emphasis on how do we get small businesses and small contractors to get certified and get the financing needed to move forward and take advantage of these clean energy sector opportunities.

When we were in the infrastructure section, there was a strong emphasis on needing to plan not just for existing road projects, but also, how do we think about the fact that in the future, we need a cleaner transportation industry.

So there's a lot of overlap between all these different breakout sessions that we engaged in. And it underscores how, despite the fact that we had some breakout sessions, we're going to have to figure out how to break out of these silos and integrate these strategies if we're going to be able to get the most bang for the buck.

So overall, we generated a lot of important ideas. Some of them, I think, we can translate immediately into administration plans and, potentially, legislation. What I want to do, though, is for the remaining part of this jobs forum, just to call on all of you and to see what kinds of ideas maybe I have not highlighted, things that really stood out in the sessions. Or if you didn't have an opportunity to speak, but you've got this burning idea that is really going to set the world on fire, I want to make sure that you've got the opportunity to—[*laughter*]—that you've got the opportunity to lay it out right now.

So yes—and please do me a favor and introduce yourself. Some of you I—a lot of you I know, but not everybody in the room knows you.

Health Care Reform

Q. My name is David Barber, from Barber Foods in Portland, Maine. One of the things that we spent a lot of time on was the regulation, from our standpoint, and to your point about not creating regulations and realizing the unintended consequences of those. So that's very important to us as a small manufacturer of food in Portland, Maine.

One of the things that I wanted to make sure—that we didn't get out in my session—was we employ 750 people. We're self-insured. We spend $4 million every year in health care, self-insured, and we develop programs to have our associates be healthier. We've avoided an extra cost this year of 10 percent in our rise; normally, it's 20 percent. We kept that down to below 10 percent by creating programs to keep our associates more healthy, and we are sharing those with anybody that will listen. So we want to make sure that gets out.

The President. Well, this is not a plant—[*laughter*]—but let me just point out, obviously, the inefficiencies of our current health system are a drag on the economy and a drag on job growth. And if you, as a small business or a large business, are seeing premiums for your employees going up 15, 20 percent a year—I've had letters from small businesses who said that their policy was jacking up their costs by as much as 48 percent—in those kinds of situations, you're not going to be able to invest in hiring that new worker, because you're trying to keep the worker you've got and provide them coverage.

So it is very important, I think, for us to take steps both legislatively but also on the—in the private sector to improve prevention, improve wellness, bend the cost curve. I actually think that the legislation that we are working—that as we speak, I hope Members of Congress are working on right now—will have that salutary impact.

But you're absolutely right that companies like yours, companies like Safeway, have done some very important, creative work on your own. And the question is, are there ways that we can further incentivize those practices and spread the word to companies all across the economy that you can save money that in turn can be used to reinvest in your businesses? Okay.

Yes, sir.

Transcripts of Forum Discussions

Q. I don't bring an idea, but in reference to silos, is there going to be a document that boils down to different groups so that the people in my group understood what happened in the next group, because they might use ideas from the next group.

The President. Yes. We had extensive note-taking in every one of the sessions, and that will be distributed to all of you. And I want to assure you that this is just the start of this interaction that we're having with you, so you will then have the opportunity to continue to refine a lot of these ideas. We'll probably set up some working groups coming out of this. And the input that we're soliciting from you is going to be continuous. All right?

Frank.

Stabilizing State and Local Governments

Q. Mr. President, I just——

The President. Introduce yourself.

Q. Frank Cownie, the mayor of Des Moines, Iowa. I would emphasize that we feel that it's important that we get targeted fiscal assistance to local government, whether it's through infrastructure projects that we talked about in our group or whether it's energy efficiency block grants or whether it's TIGER grants or whether it's CDBG. Those are all formulas that work and have worked in the past. And I think to get money to where people live, where people work, where the GDP is produced in this country, that we have to target those kinds of opportunities.

The President. Okay. Let me just pick up on this point, and this may have been discussed in some of the groups, but it might not have. As tough as this financial crisis and recession has been on the Federal budget, it has in some cases been worse on State and local government budgets. About a third of the Recovery Act were essentially stabilization funds either for individuals in the form of unemployment insurance or assistance to States so that they didn't have to lay off teachers and firefighters and police officers. We don't get a lot of credit for that. I would point out that some mayors and Governors who were very critical of the Recovery Act nevertheless were very happy to get this money.

But I think that it does raise the point that what we've been able to do this year is to stabilize aggregate demand. And that's been very important to preventing a much more difficult economic environment and a tougher job environment. Next year, we're going to still have some of those challenges, because usually, State and local government revenues lag the recovery as a whole. They may need some more help from the Federal Government. And I think it's important, particularly for business leaders here, to understand that fact, that if you see a complete collapse in State and local government spending on basic needs, that that could create a very bad business climate for all of you. And that's something that we're going to have to consider working on very carefully. Okay?

All right, the gentleman right there.

Availability of Credit/Credit Freeze

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. My name is Noel Cuellar from Michigan—tough out there. One of the things that we're looking at is—medium-size small businesses—is the ability for financing. You know, every month is looking better; it looks like we're bouncing back. But the ability to get the financing for the upswing, to buy the raw materials—so we're kind of struggling buying raw materials or hiring people. It's a tough decision.

The President. Well, look, as I said earlier, the credit markets were completely frozen for everybody. Because of extraordinary intervention on our part, the financial panic abated, and some of the credit markets out there thawed. So for a Fortune 100 company right now, you can probably get credit. If you are a small business out there right now, though, it is still very tough.

Now, we have increased SBA loans by about 73 percent. And we are constantly looking for more ways that we can push the banks and the credit markets to get money into the hands of small and medium-sized businesses who create the majority of jobs.

One of the things that—I'm not sure if Secretary Geithner is here, but—there he is, he's in the back. One of the things that I think Tim will

testify is that basically, at least every other day I ask him, what are we doing to help credit flow to small and medium-sized businesses? And there is going to be an overlap between what we're doing on the Recovery Act and what we need to do in terms of bank policy, what we're doing—what the Fed is doing in terms of the credit markets.

And one of the things that we're really exploring is how can we help the community banks and smaller banks to loosen up credit. In fairness to them, they're a little bit caught in between, because bank regulators are looking at their books and saying, "Boy, that was a real mess." So they're asking them to increase their capital requirements and tighten up their lending criteria. On the other hand, they've got the President of the United States saying, why aren't you lending more? And so they're a little bit in a fix.

Now, some of that is unavoidable because they really do need to strengthen—you know, the banking sector was in bad shape, and it was overleveraged, and we really did need to take some steps to shore up the banking system. But we have to make sure that we don't overcorrect, and that's something that we're concerned about.

Some of the smaller banks also—although they weren't involved in some of the crazy stuff that was going on on Wall Street, frankly—were just way overextended when it came to the commercial real estate market, built a lot of malls out there, a lot of strip malls out there. And now they're finding that with the commercial real estate market actually not having bottomed out, it's sort of trailing the housing market in terms of problems that it's having. That's having a lot of effect on small banks as well.

The bottom line is this: We know this is a priority. We are pushing as hard as we can to do it in a responsible way. We actually think that by getting financial regulatory reform done, which is currently pending in Congress, that will provide the certainty and the framework available to us so that we can then help these banks more effectively do the right thing than we're doing right now. Okay?

I want to—right behind the gentleman that I just called. I want to make sure that we're getting a little gender equity here in the—no, no, not you. [*Laughter*] Yes, right here. Go ahead.

Agriculture Industry

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'm a farmer from Missouri. My name is Rhonda Perry, and I'm representing the National Family Farm Coalition today. And I just wanted to bring your attention—which I know that you understand fully—that there's been a lot of conversation about we need to get the biggest bang for our buck. And many times, in many places around this country, in rural communities, independent family farmers are the biggest bang for our buck in terms of creating jobs with independent businesses that depend on farmers. From the people we buy our seed from to the people we use to process our meat to the transportation system to haul our grain, we create a lot of jobs in rural Missouri. So we want to make sure that's not overlooked.

And one of the things that you and the First Lady have highlighted is this incredible move that's underfoot where thousands of farmers are producing food for local markets. So we need to make sure that we have the infrastructure in place, from the meat processing to the transportation and storage, to make that a reality, because that really is and could be a reality for us.

And whereas we have tended in the past to put a lot of money into the hands of corporate agribusiness out here in our rural communities, they have not proven to be the bang for the buck that independent family farmers have in terms of job creation that are good-paying and fair jobs in our communities. So thank you for all you're doing on competition and on local food. And we just want to remember that we are a job creator out here. So thank you.

The President. Thank you.

Robert, you had your hand up. Go ahead. Wait for the mike, so everybody can hear you.

National Economy/Federal Deficit

Q. You know, most of the things that have been proposed today cost money. And there is this concern about the Federal deficit. I hope that your administration will recognize, as I know you will, that it's possible, first of all, to reduce the deficit over time and sometimes in the short run realize that you need to increase the deficit. And I hope the concern about the deficit in the long run doesn't crowd out the need for additional spending in the short run.

And I also think that some of these programs that increase jobs and increase GDP are probably the fastest way to get the economy back on a track that will reduce the deficit over time. It's certainly a better way to reduce the deficit than putting ourselves into a debtor's prison and assume we can deflate our way to recovery.

The President. Well, I think this is an important point. We've been talking a lot about specific initiatives. There is a macroeconomic element to this whole thing, and so let me just amplify what was just said. We have a structural deficit that is real and growing, apart from the financial crisis. We inherited it. We're spending about 23 percent of GDP, and we take in 18 percent of GDP, and that gap is growing because health care costs—Medicare and Medicaid in particular—are growing, and we've got to do something about that.

You then layer on top of that the huge loss of tax revenue as a consequence of the financial crisis and the greater demands for unemployment insurance and so forth. That's another layer. Probably the smallest layer is actually what we did in terms of the Recovery Act. I mean, I think there is a misperception out there that somehow the Recovery Act caused these deficits. No. I mean, we had—we've got a 9-point-something trillion-dollar deficit. Maybe a trillion dollars of it can be attributed to both the Recovery Act as well as the cleanup work that we had to do in terms of the banks.

It turns out, actually, TARP, as wildly unpopular as it has been, has been much cheaper than any of us anticipated. So that's not what's contributing to the deficit. We've got a long-term structural deficit that is primarily being driven by health care costs and our long-term entitlement programs. All right, so that's the baseline.

Now, if we can't grow our economy, then it is going to be that much harder for us to reduce the deficit. The single most important thing we could do right now for deficit reduction is to spark strong economic growth, which means that people who've got jobs are paying taxes and businesses that are making profits have taxes, are paying taxes. That's the most important thing we can do. We understand that in this administration. That's not always the dialogue that's going on out there in public, and we're going to have to do a better job of educating the public on that.

The last thing we would want to do in the midst of a—what is a weak recovery is us to essentially take more money out of the system either by raising taxes or by drastically slashing spending. And frankly, because State and local governments generally don't have the capacity to engage in deficit spending, some of that obligation falls on the Federal Government.

Having said that, what is also true is that unless businesses and global capital markets have some sense that we've got a plan, medium and long term, to get the deficit down, it's hard for us to be credible, and that also could be counterproductive.

So we've got about as difficult a economic play as is possible, which is to press the accelerator, in terms of job growth, but then know when to apply the brakes in the outyears, and do that credibly. And we are trying to strike that balance, but we're going to need help from all of you who oftentimes are more credible than politicians in delivering that message, because we want to leverage whatever public dollars are spent, and we are under no illusion that somehow the Federal Government can spend its way out of this recession. But it is absolutely true that any of the ideas that have been mentioned here are still going to require some public dollars, and those are actually good investments to make right now. Okay.

How much time do we have? Just want to make sure I'm not—we're doing good. Okay, good.

We actually have an Internet question, because we're trying to make sure that this goes

out to other locations. What do you got, Macon?

Education

White House Director of New Media R. Macon Phillips III. Mr. President, as you know, in addition to all these people, a lot of people have been watching through the web site, all the breakout sessions, which will be available for anyone to watch afterwards for those of you who want to check out other ones, but they've also been talking on Facebook, on Twitter about what they're seeing.

And we had one question from Don Arrington, who says, "What confuses me is I have an MBA, and that has educated me right out of the market. I thought furthering my education was supposed to help me in a tough job market."

The President. Well, look, law—first of all, I got a law degree. So it was more expensive, it took longer, and I don't know how much more useful it was. [*Laughter*] But that e-mail, I think, is indicative of what a lot of people are feeling out there. This is not the normal recession that we've just gone through. This is one that is going deep into the economy. It is not hitting blue-collar workers alone; it is hitting white-collar workers just as hard, if—and in some cases, when it comes to middle management, it's actually hitting them harder. A lot of people who expected to always be able to find a job are finding the job market really tight.

I guess what I'd say is, number one, we know long term that more education means more opportunity for the individual, greater income for the individual. That is not decreasing; that is actually increasing—the gap between higher education and somebody with a high school education. And in a knowledge-based economy, that's not going away.

So as frustrating as it may be for the college grad or the MBA, the fact of the matter is, you are still going to be much better off than if you didn't have that education, short term as well as long term. It is not only good for the individual, it is also critical for our economy.

I told this story, I think, in this room just a while back, but I just want to repeat it, because we were doing a session on science, technology, and math education. And one of the things that I'm very proud of in this administration that nobody, except maybe Friedman and a couple others, have paid attention to is, we are actually initiating more education reform, tougher education reform than just about any administration over the last several years, and people like Randi and others are helping us in this process.

But I told the story of my lunch with the President—President Lee of South Korea. And, Gary, you were in that lunch; remember, I asked him, "What's happening in terms of education policy in Korea?" And he said, "Well, you know, my biggest problem is Korean parents are too demanding, and they are insisting, for example, that I import, and I've had to import, thousands of foreign English teachers, because they all feel that first graders should be learning English already."

Now, you think about that mentality, which is pervasive throughout Asia—you saw the same thing in China—and it gives you a sense of what we're up against in terms of global competition.

So as tough as this recession is, as tough as the job market may be, we need to double down on our education investment. We have to be more demanding of our schools, of ourselves as parents. Young people are going to have to be more demanding in terms of our ability to compete. And I don't want—the last thing I want—and this actually relates to the previous question—the last thing I want is us to essentially use up our seed corn here, to not make investments in education, to not make our investments in clean energy, to essentially say, the only way we can handle this is to constrict our dreams and to go small, because these other countries out there, they're making these investments in infrastructure, in education, in clean energy. And we can't lose the race just because we're going through a tough time right now. Now is the time actually to make sure that we're prioritizing properly and pushing even harder on that front.

Okay. Yes, sir.

The President's Legislative Agenda

Q. Mr. President, Fred Lampropoulos of Merit Medical Systems. One of the overriding thoughts in our forum was that there's uncertainty, that there's such an aggressive legislative agenda that businesspeople don't really know what they ought to do. In fact, one CEO said that he thought he has to kind of wait and may have to restructure his business—this is a large, multinational pharma company—and that uncertainty is really what's holding back the jobs. And I hear that a lot in the press. There's so much going on, no one really knows what to do. How are you going to give us that confidence and make sure that we're certain about both the near-term and long-term growth prospects?

The President. You know, I actually think this is a legitimate concern. This has been a tough year, with a lot of uncertainty. Now, at the beginning of this crisis, when we were in transition, we could have made a decision. And there were legitimate arguments for that decision—or there are legitimate arguments for the course that could have been taken, which is to say, things are so bad—we've got two wars, we've got a crisis in the financial markets, we've just found out we lost 700,000 jobs per month in the first quarter—that we should not try any big initiatives legislatively, just shouldn't do it, until everything has stabilized and settled down.

And I strongly considered that argument. But I think the response is the point that was just made earlier, that if we keep on putting off tough decisions about health care, about energy, about education, we'll never get to the point where there's a lot of appetite for that. I mean, keep in mind we just went through 10, 15 years where everything looked pretty good. Except what happened was, is that that growth was built on a house of cards. The fundamentals of the economy were weakening. And they were papered over by massive leverage, credit card debt, a housing market bubble.

Our health care system we had to keep on putting off, but the fact of the matter is, there is no way that businesses can sustain their current spending levels on health care. They can't do it. And families can't either. And this CEO of a pharmaceutical company, I think, would know that, because I'm sure that companies and health care providers are sending that message. So my belief was that we had to start tackling some of those fundamental problems if we were going to emerge stronger than we were before.

Having said that, my strong hope is, is that we get health care done by the end of this year. That eliminates some uncertainty because people will have a sense of what's going to be happening in the health care field; that we get financial regulatory reform done, if not by the end of this year then early next year so that banks have certainty; and that—to the extent that the uncertainty is derived from these major legislative initiatives—I think, will be solved in the next few months.

I think that the best way for us to deal with long-term uncertainty is to tackle the things that we've been putting off and sweeping under the rug. There's no point in us pretending that these aren't problems and thinking that somehow we can go back to business as usual, because I think if we take that approach, then we might be able to manage for the next 3 or 4 or 5 years, but sooner or later, we are going to get back into the same problems that we've already been in. And I think it's very important to start doing the hard business now. Okay.

Yes, right there.

Manufacturing Industry

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. My name is Chandra Brown, and I'm the president of United Streetcar, which is a subsidiary of Oregon Iron Works. And we are hiring, and we are building the first modern streetcar in 58 years back in this country. So we're bringing jobs from Europe to here.

And I just wanted to emphasize the importance of having the Federal Government as a partner in some of these infrastructures, because we're a traditional manufacturing union house, and we want to be the next generation in clean energy, whether that's building streetcar vehicles for the 85 cities looking for it, whether it's building the first wave energy device that we're going to be building off the coast of Oregon.

I think it's critical that our traditional manufacturing base, that those jobs stay here in the

United States, and that we can continue to advance on those where it's going to be a benefit for all things—climate change, job creation, and economic development—especially for streetcars and the 85 cities that are looking at them. Thank you.

The President. I'm looking forward to riding on one of them.

Q. All right, any time.

The President. Good. This gentleman right here has been waiting. Go ahead.

Visa Regulations/Exports

Q. Mr. President, thank you for the invitation. My name is Bill Aossey from Cedar Rapids, Iowa. I have a request that won't cost us anything. It'll bring money home. Can you please help ease the visa regulations so we can have students coming back and international business visitors that will bring money and cultivate long-term resources of culture and academic relationships? So please help ease this visa—it'll bring money in, and it won't cost us anything. Thank you.

The President. Well, I think you make an important suggestion. We live in an interconnected world and an interdependent world, and I think that, properly, we had to respond to 9/11 by reviewing our policies on visas, on immigration, on a whole host of issues.

But I think it is important for us not to get into a bunker mentality. That's not America's strength. Our strength has always been saying yes to the rest of the world, inviting ideas and different cultures and commerce. And we have not seen the same kinds of openness, I think, over the last several years that I'd like to see.

Now, we've got to do it in a prudent way, but, you know, let's just take the example of foreign students. One of the great things about this country is we get the best and the brightest talent to study here, and once they study here, they start enjoying the intellectual freedom and the entrepreneurship, and they decide to stay, and they start new businesses. And suddenly, you've got a whole new generation of folks who are creating Intel or other extraordinary businesses. If those students start seeing a closed door, then we are losing what is one of our greatest competitive advantages, and that's something that I think we're committed to doing.

Let me broaden the point. There are a lot of things that don't cost money that could make a difference. So this goes back to the issue of certainty. I mean, I do think that providing some regulatory certainty and reducing redtape on a whole bunch of areas like infrastructure investment is very important. And what I've instructed our team to do is, any good idea that will make the systems and processes of the private sector interacting with government smoother, quicker, crisper, more tech savvy, I'm for.

And I think on—the export front is another example of where a lot of times just showing up, making sure that Gary Locke or our Trade Representative—what's that guy's name? Ron Kirk? [*Laughter*] I'm messing with you, Ron. [*Laughter*] Is he here? You can tell him I said that—[*laughter*]—but making sure that they are actively pursuing business opportunities overseas, and we are not making it tougher.

Let me give you one specific example that could have some significant job implications. We still have a lot of trade restrictions on high-tech exports that are actually carries over—carryovers from the cold war. Now, part of the problem is we haven't gotten the kind of intellectual property enforcement in other countries that we need, and so, understandably, businesses are wary about sending their products overseas just to be duplicated and then shipped back to us with—using lower-wage labor. But in some cases, it really has to do with a failure to update and review what restrictions still make sense and what restrictions don't.

Now, China, Korea, a whole bunch of Asian nations would love to import some high-value-added, high-tech stuff that could create huge numbers of jobs here in the United States. If we just increased our share of exports to Asia by 1 percent, that's about a quarter million jobs right there; if we increased it by 5 [percent],° that's a million jobs. That fills a big hole; it doesn't cost us money.

So we are going to be scouring Federal regulations, restrictions, et cetera that are

inhibiting export growth. We're going to be trying to see if we can use the Federal Government to link up small business and medium-sized businesses to exports more effectively. I know a lot of this stuff was talked about in the exports section. This is going to be a top priority.

Even though I was only supposed to take one more question, I'm going to take two, because I had actually called on this gentleman right here, and I felt bad that—go ahead.

Reinvention of the Business Sector

Q. Yes, I am Farooq Kathwari, chairman and CEO of Ethan Allen. Just to follow up on this question, immigration—although my comment is on a separate subject. I came to the United States at age 21 with just a few hundred dollars. I went to work during the day printing envelopes, went to school. And this country afforded me the opportunity to be where I am today. I think we should make sure that that kind of an opportunity is not taken away.

Now, my comment is that Ethan Allen is a 77-year-old company. We have—to survive, we've had to reinvent, either by chance or by plan. Otherwise, anybody 77 years old, in an enterprise, cannot survive. Well, this last year—I refer it to like a tsunami hitting the economy—has given us more opportunity to reinvent in the last 7 or 8 months than I've seen in the last 25 years that I've been president of Ethan Allen.

We have—in the first 7 or 8 months, we've had to consolidate. We had to let people go. We are a vertically integrated company, from manufacturing to retailing to logistics. We have taken the brunt of this recession in communities that are very, very far away from Washington, in Vermont, in Maine, North Carolina, Pennsylvania. And we have had people with us for 30 to 40 years we had to let go, but we had to.

In the last 7 months, as I said, after all this major reinvention, major consolidation—but we are reinventing. In the last few months, we have been adding people. We make furniture, and we have 30 stores in China, and we're shipping them from the United States. It's possible. I would say, Mr. President, that we should not miss this opportunity. Crisis creates an opportunity.

We as business leaders are ready for reinvention. And I think the government should help us—should help us in fiscal policy, should help us in tax policy—because a reinvention like you talk of the infrastructure of building bridges—but we got to build up banks, we've got to build our technology. And I think the government can play a very, very important role, because this opportunity is going to be short, and I think we should not miss it.

The President. Well, this is actually a good place to close. What people are going through every day is heartbreaking, all across the country. And the decisions that you just made as a CEO, obviously, have enormous ripple effects. You had to do it in order to keep your company profitable. On the other hand, the consequences of those layoffs obviously are felt deeply not just by the individuals involved but by the places—the restaurant—that that person who's been laid off used to frequent, and it just keeps on rippling throughout the economy.

Digging ourselves out of the hole that we've dug ourselves into is not going to be easy. The loss of—the job loss this past year and the months preceding it were as severe as anything we've seen for a very long time, as rapid as we've seen in a very long time. And generating the kind of economic growth that leads to the kind of hiring that gets our employment base back up to where it was is going to be hard, and it's going to take a lot of work.

But I just want to echo what I said at the beginning of this session. We still have the best universities in the world. We still have the most open, entrepreneurial economy and market of any advanced nation. We still have the most productive workers in the world. Despite the issues of unsettledness around some of—things like the banking industry and the financial sector, the truth of the matter is, is that we are still the most stable country in the world, which is why, during the midst of this crisis, everybody was buying into the U.S. and the dollar was

* White House correction.

shooting up and people were snatching up treasuries, because they still have confidence in what America has to offer.

And so the most important message that all of us, I think, have to take away from this session is that if we combine traditional American optimism with an acknowledgment that we can't go back to business as usual and that we have to rediscover a sense of seriousness of purpose when it comes to educating our kids or when it comes to government managing money properly or it comes to CEOs feeling some obligations to their workers and their communities, if we can recapture that sense that we're in this thing together and that we are willing to work hard, that America is not great because it's owed to us, but we've been great because previous generations have put in the hard work to get us there, then I'm confident that we're going to get through this tough time and the 21st century is going to be as good for us as the 20th was.

But it's not going to come easily, and it is going to require a level of cooperation and a willingness to work strategically together that we have not seen over the last several years. And frankly, this town and the way the political dialogue is structured right now is not conducive to what we need to do to be globally competitive. And all of you are leaders in your communities—in the business sector and the labor sector, in academia, we even have a few pundits here—it is important to understand what's at stake and that we can't keep on playing games.

I mentioned that I was in Asia on this trip thinking about the economy. When I sat down for a round of interviews, not one of them asked me about Asia, not one of them asked me about the economy. I was asked several times about had I read Sarah Palin's book. [*Laughter*] True. But it's an indication of how our political debate doesn't match up with what we need to do and where we need to go.

But this kind of dialogue helps, and I appreciate all of you participating. Thank you, everybody.

[*At this point, the President greeted participants in the forum.*]

The President. Excuse me, everybody. Excuse me. I just—because I'm traveling to Allentown, Pennsylvania——

Audience member. Yay! [*Laughter*]

The President. ——I want to make sure that this room of business leaders and labor leaders and others just have a chance real quickly to hear directly from the mayor of Allentown, who's here right now. Come on up, Mr. Mayor, because I want to make sure that—this is the kind of town where the rubber hits the road, and I'm going to be having conversations with workers, small businesses, community colleges, and I want the mayor just to give a sense of what's going on and what you think would make the biggest difference in your town.

Mayor Ed Pawlowski of Allentown, PA. Well, thank you so much, Mr. President, and I want to say we're really honored to have you in Allentown—coming to Allentown tomorrow. I, for one, am very thankful that you're taking on these challenges. I know you were handed with a mess when you came in—probably the worst economy in 70 years. And I want to say thank you personally for all that you've done. I think you're doing a great job.

On behalf of the city of Allentown, we have had some difficult challenges, like most midsized cities in the Northeast. Our unemployment rate last month has gone up; it went up to 9.8 percent. We have about 41,000 people in that region that are unemployed.

But there's great things that are happening. We hopefully—and hopefully, you're going to see some of those great things. We've got some great companies that are actually growing, that are expanding. We have a company that I know you're going to be at tomorrow that is actually manufacturing steel still in the United States and doing a great job at it, growing their business, and they're growing the workforce.

We have a number of unique small businesses. In that particular region, we're very diversified. We have a lot of Fortune 500 companies. We have Air Products and Chemicals that's headquartered there; Pennsylvania Power & Light; Olympus has their North American headquarters around the city of

Allentown. But we have over 1,400 employers. Only 1,100 of them are large employers. The majority are small businesses.

And there's a number of small businesses in the area that are actually growing the economy. One of them is the Terra Group, and I want to say thank you on behalf of them. They started a product that was a small water filtration—portable water filtration system, and the Marines have just bought that for our troops in Afghanistan. [*Applause*] And they're expanding—you could clap on that, that was—[*laughter*]. They're actually expanding to hire another 40 jobs because of that.

The President. That's great.

Mayor Pawlowski. And so I want to thank you. We look forward to having you tomorrow, and we look forward to having you around the city of Allentown and talking to many of the businesses that are doing some great things in rebuilding this economy.

The President. And if there are any CEOs here who are looking to locate—[*laughter*]—I'm sure Mayor Bing, Mayor Pawlowski, Mayor Cownie of Des Moines, they're all interested in talking to you. [*Laughter*] And they have literature, I'm sure. [*Laughter*] So thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:57 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Douglas Holtz-Eakin, president, DHE Consulting, LLC; Lawrence Mishel, president, Economic Policy Institute; Alan S. Blinder, Gordon S. Rentschler Memorial Professor of Economics, Princeton University; Joseph E. Stiglitz, professor of economics, Columbia University; Angie Selden, chief executive officer, Arise Virtual Solutions, Inc.; James P. Hoffa, general president, International Brotherhood of Teamsters; Robert A. Iger, president and chief executive officer, The Walt Disney Company; Randall L. Stephenson, chairman, president, and chief executive officer, AT&T, Inc.; Randi Weingarten, president, American Federation of Teachers; David Barber, executive vice president, Barber Foods; Noel Cuellar, president, Primera Plastics, Inc.; Rhonda Perry, member, National Family Farm Coalition; Robert Kuttner, cofounder and coeditor, American Prospect magazine; Thomas L. Friedman, columnist, New York Times; Secretary of Commerce Gary F. Locke; Fred P. Lampropoulos, chairman, president, and chief executive officer, Merit Medical Systems; William Aossey, Jr., president, MIDAMAR; former Gov. Sarah Palin of Alaska; and Mayor David Bing of Detroit, MI. A participant referred to the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grants (CD–BG) program and the Department of Transportation's Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant program.

Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree
December 3, 2009

Thank you. Merry Christmas, happy holidays, Washington, DC. I want to, first of all, thank Secretary Salazar for not only the kind introduction but the extraordinary work he is doing in preserving the incredible bounty and natural resources of this country.

I want to thank all those involved in helping to organize this great event. Thank you to Randy Jackson and all the performers putting on an incredible show. I told Sasha just—we're not on "American Idol"—[*laughter*]—no singing. [*Laughter*]

I also want to thank Neil Mulholland, Jon Jarvis, and Peggy O'Dell from the National Park Service for being with us and all the Park Service employees who've worked so hard to put this event together. Give them a big round of applause. And I want to thank my outstanding Vice President and his gorgeous granddaughters—Joe Biden. Stand up, Joe.

In 1923, the Washington, DC, public schools wrote a letter to the White House asking if they could put up a Christmas tree on the South Lawn. And First Lady Grace Coolidge said they could use the Ellipse. [*Laughter*] And in the

eight decades since, in times of war and peace, hardship and joy, Americans from every corner of this Nation have gathered here to share in the holiday spirit.

Tonight we celebrate a story that is as beautiful as it is simple. The story of a child born far from home to parents guided only by faith, but who would ultimately spread a message that has endured for more than 2,000 years, that no matter who we are or where we are from, we are each called to love one another as brother and sister.

While this story may be a Christian one, its lesson is universal. It speaks to the hope we share as a people, and it represents a tradition that we celebrate as a country, a tradition that has come to represent more than any one holiday or religion, but a season of brotherhood and generosity to our fellow citizens.

It's that spirit of unity that we must remember as we light the National Christmas Tree, a tree that will shine its light far beyond our city and our shores to every American around the world. And that's why tonight our thoughts and prayers are with the men and women who will be spending this holiday far away from home, the mothers and fathers, the sons and daughters of our military who risk their lives every day to keep us safe. We will be thinking of you and praying for you during this holiday season.

And let's also remember our neighbors who are struggling here at home, those who've lost a job or a home, a friend or a loved one, because even though it's easy to focus on receiving at this time of year, it's often in the simple act of giving that we find the greatest happiness.

So on behalf of Michelle and Malia and Sasha and my mother-in-law Mama Robinson, I want to wish all of you a very merry Christmas. May you go out with joy and be led forth in peace.

And now to the serious business of pressing the button and lighting this beautiful tree. So, guys, come up here. I need some assistance. I'm technologically challenged, and some—I might not get this right. So we're going to do a countdown, starting from five. Everybody got to help me out here. Five, four, three, two, one—ho! It worked!

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:25 p.m. on the Ellipse at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainer Randy Jackson; Neil J. Mulholland, president and chief executive officer, National Park Foundation; and Jonathan B. Jarvis, Director, and Peggy O'Dell, National Capital Region Director, National Park Service.

Remarks at Lehigh Carbon Community College and a Question-and-Answer Session in Allentown, Pennsylvania
December 4, 2009

The President. Please, have a seat. Thank you. It is great to see you all. It's good to be back in Pennsylvania. Good to be back in Allentown and Lehigh Valley. This is—lot of wonderful faces here.

There are a couple of people I want to acknowledge. First of all, the great Governor of the great State of Pennsylvania, please give it up for Ed Rendell. We've got an outstanding congressional delegation that's here: Congresswoman Allyson Schwartz is here; Congressman Chris Carney is here; and Congressman Paul Kanjorski is here.

We also have Keith McCall, speaker of the Pennsylvania State House. We've got Ed Pawlowski, mayor of Allentown, but maybe the next Member of Congress. We've got John Callahan, mayor of Bethlehem. I just want to clarify here: Ed's not running; John's running. [*Laughter*] I got those reversed. So don't vote for Ed, because he's—[*laughter*]—I mean, vote for him for mayor. [*Laughter*] John's going to be outstanding—and Don Cunningham, Lehigh county executive.

So it's been about a year and a half since I last visited Allentown and Bethlehem, and I was running for office. And while it was a

pleasure to be here as a candidate, it's an honor to be here as your President. It really is.

Pennsylvania helped put me into office. But—[*applause*]—thank you. But even on the most trying days, I want you to know that I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve you in these challenging times for America. And I'm grateful for this chance to get out of Washington—[*laughter*]—and spend the day in the Lehigh Valley, talking with people about this very tough economy.

I just came from Allentown Metal Works, where I had a chance to visit with workers there. And they were working hard not just to forge the heavy machinery that makes this country run, in fact, one of their projects is actually related to the rebuilding of the World Trade Center and the Twin Towers down there. And so you could just tell the extraordinary pride that the workers take in this project. But like so many others across America, these workers have also been doing the best they can to stay afloat in a brutal recession that has hit folks like them hardest of all.

In the 2 years since this recession began, too many members of our American family have felt the gut punch of a pink slip. Eight million Americans have lost their jobs. Every one of us knows somebody who has been swept up by this storm: neighbors who've lost their homes or their health care, friends who've used up their savings or put off their retirement, relatives who've downscaled their dreams or dropped them entirely, young people who aren't sure whether they can afford their college educations. I've heard these stories from every corner of America, and I see them in the letters that I read every single night.

So as we come to the end of this very tough year, I want to do something I haven't had a chance to do that often during my first year in office, and that is to share some modestly encouraging news on our economy. Today the Labor Department released its monthly employment survey and reported that the Nation lost 11,000 jobs in November, which was about 115,000 fewer than was forecast and is about close to zero, from the perspective of our overall economy. The unemployment rate ticked down instead of up. The report also found that we lost about 160,000 fewer jobs over the last 2 months than we had previously thought. So overall, this is the best jobs report that we've seen since 2007.

And this is good news, just in time for the season of hope. I've got to admit, my chief economist, Christy Romer, she got about four hugs when she handed us the report. But I do want to keep this in perspective. We've still got a long way to go. I consider one job lost one job too many. And as I said yesterday at a jobs conference in Washington, good trends don't pay the rent. We've got to actually grow jobs and get America back to work as quickly as we can.

Now, the journey from here will not be without setbacks or struggles. There may be gyrations in the months ahead. There are going to be some months where the reports are a little better, some months where the reports are worse, but the trendline right now is good. The direction is clear. When you think about how this year began, even before I was sworn in, and we were losing 700,000 jobs a month—a month—today's report's a welcome sign that there are better days ahead. In fact, we were losing more than 700,000 jobs a month, and that's roughly half the size of Philadelphia—each month. Our financial system was on the verge of collapse. Economists were warning of a second great depression. You remember. [*Laughter*]

So from the moment I was sworn into office, I began taking a number of difficult steps to end this economic crisis. And by the way, can I just say, I didn't take these steps because they were popular or because they were particularly gratifying to me—they weren't. You can be sure that when I was running for this office, things like saving the banks and rescuing auto companies were not on my to-do list. They weren't even on my want-to-do list. [*Laughter*] But I did them because they were necessary to save our country from even greater catastrophe.

We also took steps to unlock our frozen credit markets so average Americans could get the loans that they needed to buy a home or a car, to go to college, or start a small business. We enacted measures to stem the crisis in our housing markets, helping responsible homeowners stay in their homes, curbing the decline in

home values overall. And we've seen some stabilization in the housing market. We cut taxes. Think about this, because you wouldn't know it from watching the news: The only tax policy we instituted during the course of this year was to cut taxes for 95 percent of hard-working families, just as I promised I would when I ran for President.

And we passed the Recovery Act, which created or saved up to 1.6 million jobs, stopped our freefall, lifted our economy to the point where it's growing for the first time in more than a year. And I was just talking to the Governor before we walked in, and he's got a whole series of charts about how much more steel was produced in Pennsylvania because of the Recovery Act, how much more infrastructure spending is taking place out here, putting people to work doing the work that America needs done.

So today's report is another hopeful sign that these steps that we took, difficult steps, have helped turn the tide. But we've got a lot more work to do before we can celebrate, because even though our economy is now growing again, a lot of companies are still hesitant to hire; they're still worried about hiring.

Now, some of this is because they're still trying to get out of the red brought on by tough times this year, and they're still seeing consumers pull back because people got overextended on their credit cards and those home equity loans suddenly didn't look so attractive. And so people are spending a little bit less.

But part of what's happened, also, among a lot of companies is they figured out how to squeeze more productivity out of the workers that they've got. They're working people longer hours; they're doing more overtime, or not. But either way, they're producing the same amount of product or providing the same services without hiring more people.

And that's something that we're going to have to really work on. Now, it's typical that it takes time for job growth to catch up with economic growth. And it's typical that it takes a little more time to come out of a recession when it comes to hiring. But Americans who've been desperately looking for work for months, some of them maybe for a year or longer, they can't wait. And we won't wait. We need to do everything we can right now to get our businesses hiring again so that our friends and our neighbors can go back to work.

So yesterday at the White House, we had a forum on jobs and growth with leaders from every sector of our economy and every political and economic viewpoint, from the CEO of Google to small-business owners who know our economy as well as anybody. And I wanted to ask them what they needed to start hiring again. And we had a frank discussion about a variety of ideas that helped refine our thinking.

We talked about investments in clean energy to not only create jobs but to make America a global leader in renewable energy technology. We talked about incentives for homeowners for the materials and labor they need to make their homes more energy efficient and a smart electricity grid that saves you money and moves our economy forward.

We talked about additional ways to lift small businesses, which are both the great generator of jobs and the truest reflection of our values. We talked about additional investments in America's roads and bridges and railways and ports. Nobody has been a bigger champion of this than Governor Rendell: rebuilding the critical infrastructure of our economy.

So on Tuesday, I'm going to speak in greater detail about the ideas I'll be sending to Congress to help jump-start private sector hiring and get Americans back to work. But here's the thing, Allentown: We've got to do more than manage our way through this crisis, because long before the recession hit, many of our communities, including communities right here in Pennsylvania, were struggling even when the economy was doing relatively well. Plants were closing; jobs were leaving, especially in manufacturing. For too many families and communities, the recession wasn't a new challenge; it's a permanent one. It's been going on for a decade or more. So in addition to dealing with the immediate crisis that we face today, we've got to face up to the challenges necessary to strengthen our economy for the long term.

That's why I've taken on our broken health insurance system, so that families and businesses won't have to cope with double-digit premium increases year after year. That's why my Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, is taking on our education system, so that our kids can compete in the 21st-century economy. And that's why we are working to upgrade America's most underappreciated asset, community colleges just like this one. That's why we're doing everything we can to spur new industries, like clean energy, to create good, new jobs that won't be sent offshore. And that's why, when the current emergency passes, I'm committed to bringing down the deficits that loom as a threat to our future economic growth.

Now, here's why we have to do all this: Because for decades, Washington avoided doing what was right in favor of doing what was easy, and the middle class took a beating for it. It got papered over because there was a lot of cheap credit out there, so people were just able to keep up by getting more credit cards and taking out more home equity loans, but the long-term trends were not good. That's what was happening decade after decade. Well, I did not run for President to sweep our messes under the rug with the next election in mind. I ran for President to solve our problems once and for all with the next generation in mind. That's what we're doing right now.

So here's the bottom line. I know times are tough. Michelle and I were talking the other day—there are members of our families that are out of work. We're not that far removed from struggling to pay the bills. Five, 6 years ago, we were still paying off student loans, still trying to figure out, all right, if we pay this bill this month, what do we have to give up next month. We're not that far away from there. But I promise you this: I won't rest until things get better.

I know you may not agree with every decision I make, but I promise I will always tell you the truth about why I'm making these decisions. And I know that we can come together to forge a brighter future so that places like Allentown and Bethlehem and the Lehigh Valley don't just survive, but they thrive. That's why we're here. That's what we're fighting for. And as long as I've got the privilege of being your President, I will always be there, right there with you in the thick of that fight.

So thank you so much, everybody. I appreciate you. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Listen, I've got time, I think, for three questions. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. All right, I'll make you first just because everybody is very excited about this young man asking a question. And you—we can sit down. It will be three questions. Go ahead. What's your—hold on a second. We've got microphones in there. So there you go. Go ahead.

Reinvigorating the National Economy/Education

Q. Mr. Obama, I really appreciate how you're trying to stimulate the economy to help this country out. And I was just wondering, in LCCC and in college, we've been studying some criminology, and I was wondering if—maybe if you checked out some of the statistics about legalizing prostitution, gambling, drugs, and nonviolent crime in order to stimulate some of the economy? [*Laughter*]

The President. You know, I have to say this: Well, I appreciate the boldness of your question. [*Laughter*] That will not be my jobs strategy. [*Laughter*] But let me say this—what year are you in, in school?

Q. This is my second year in college.

The President. Your second year. I mean, first of all, part of what you're supposed to do in college is question conventional wisdom. [*Laughter*] And so you're doing exactly what you're supposed to be doing—[*laughter*]—which is thinking in new ways about things.

Here's—the truth is that when you look at our economy, in the same way that we used to be an agricultural country and then we moved to an industrial age and then we went from an industrial economy into an information economy, you know, that transition means that manufacturing will never be as high of a percentage of our economy as it was back in the 1950s. It's not just because we're competing overseas; it's also that a factory that used to require a hundred guys to make something, now they can do

it with 10 guys with—because of automation and advances in technology.

So there's going to be a shift in our economy. But the capacity for a State like Pennsylvania to make enormous progress on advanced manufacturing, around infrastructure, on the one hand, and green technology, on the other, are still enormous.

I mean, think about it: We've got about $2 trillion worth of—it might even be more than that, Ed; Ed probably knows the statistics—we've got trillions of dollars of infrastructure improvements that need to be made all across the country: roads, bridges, ports. And that's just the old infrastructure. Then we've got a whole new infrastructure that we have to build.

So when we talk about, for example, the smart grid, this is not a complicated concept. We've got basically an old electricity network that leaks electricity—it leaks energy all the time. It's not efficient in the ways that it should be. And if we could create a much more efficient 21st-century grid, we could save huge amounts of energy—10, 15, 20 percent—just in making—just becoming more efficient, and that would create a whole bunch of jobs for people who would have to lay down lines and put up new transmitters and all that good stuff.

The same is true when it comes to clean energy. There is no reason why we shouldn't have the corner on wind turbine technology, on solar panel technology. In fact, some companies that are doing battery and wind and solar technology benefited from the Recovery Act, and they are now hiring people right here in Pennsylvania to do that work.

But in order for us to take advantage of this new future, we've got to make some investments now. We've got to have an infrastructure plan. And something that I've been working with the Governor on is the idea of an infrastructure bank so that instead of us just every 6 years having Congress vote to figure out what our infrastructure is—and there's no real planning to it—that you had a system where we could actually leverage private sector dollars into making investments alongside the public sector, and it wasn't based on who's got the committee chairmanship, but it was based on what are the infrastructure needs that we really have in this country and prioritize them.

When it comes to clean energy, this is a triple-win situation. If we invest now in clean energy and we acknowledge that we've got to change how we do business—for our economy, for oil independence, but also for climate change—then we can clean up our environment, we can free ourselves from dependence on foreign oil so we're not waiting to see what somebody in the Middle East is doing before we know what's going to happen to gas prices here in the United States, and we can put people to work right now. And those jobs can't be shipped out. Those are jobs that have to be done right here in the United States of America.

So that's the strategy that we're pursuing. There's one last component—two other components I just want to mention. People—first of all, I think—I noticed the press yesterday, because we had this jobs forum at the White House, they said, "Obama's finally pivoting to jobs," as if what we haven't been doing for the whole 9 months, from the day I was sworn in and we started talking about the recovery, was all about jobs. But folks' attention spans are short, I understand that. [*Laughter*]

What has happened is a lot of the debate in Washington's been around health care, so people think, well, I guess they must not be working on jobs. No, we've been working on jobs the whole time. Health care is part and parcel with where we need to take our economy. You talk to every small business—how many small-business owners are here? There may be a few. Okay, you talk to any of the folks who raised their hands and you ask them, what happened to your premiums over the last year, 2 years, 3 years. They're not just going up 7 percent or 8 percent, they're going up 25 percent, 40 percent.

Now, if you're a small-business person, and let's say you've got five employees, and you are doing the right thing by them, and you're giving them health insurance, and then you find out that what you're paying suddenly doubled over the course of 2 or 3 or 4 years, that's money that is directly out of your pocket that you

could have been reinvesting in your business or hiring more workers.

So us being able to control health care costs and giving small businesses the opportunity to pool with other small businesses and individuals around the country so that they have the same kind of leverage with insurance companies that the big guys have, that's an economic plan. That's part of our jobs growth.

Last point I want to make, and that has to do with education. You know, I was in Asia for a week, and we were mostly talking about trade and how we can increase U.S. exports. I'm tired of just them sending goods into the United States. I want to start sending goods from the United States out there.

And I think there are a lot of opportunities for us to increase exports and increase jobs here in the United States without us spending any money. If we increased U.S. exports, our share of exports to Asia by just 5 percent, we would be creating hundreds of thousands, maybe a million, 2 million jobs, just by opening up new markets.

But I mentioned this yesterday at the jobs summit, and I want to mention it again today. I was having lunch with the President of South Korea, and that country has gone from dirt poverty and now is just booming. I mean, they are doing really well. And I asked him, you know, "What's your biggest challenge in terms of education?" He said, "You know, my biggest challenge is the parents are just too demanding." [*Laughter*] He said, "They're in my office—I've had to import foreign teachers, pay for foreign teachers to come teach English to Korean kids." Because all the parents there think that their kids should be learning English when they're in first grade.

Now, I tell that story to make the point that these folks are serious. They're not—you know, their kids aren't spending a whole bunch of time playing video games or watching TV. They're out there; they're working. They're working in math; they're working in science; they're working in foreign languages. They are preparing themselves to compete.

And so, you know, one of the messages I have is that we are going to have to work just as hard. We can't take for granted that somehow it's just owed to us that automatically we've got the strongest economy. We've got to make sure that each and every one of us are working as hard as we can and working smart in order to create the jobs of the future. All right?

Okay, I've got time for two more questions. I think it's got to be a lady's turn. Right there, yes. How are you? Hold on—we'll—get the mike so we can hear you. Hold on one second—get the mike so we can hear you.

Availability of Credit/Credit Freeze

Q. I am Susan Kennedy with the Manufacturers Resource Center in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. We're one of the NIST MEP centers across the country, and I've been working with Joelle——

The President. Great.

Q. ——from your office. I have nine manufacturers here with me. One was located right next to your metal works that you visited this morning.

The President. Terrific.

Q. And they all want to know, dyingly, what you will do to loosen up the money for the small businesses and how they can compete more with the things they need to grow their businesses.

The President. Now, you're referring specifically to credit and getting loans from——

Q. Credit, yes.

The President. Is that the main priority that you're concerned about?

Q. Credit, any of you—now, I have nine people here. Anything else you want to add? [*Laughter*]

The President. Oh, so she just kind of—[*laughter*]. You know, this is like where they send the attractive person to hitchhike, right? [*Laughter*] Then the car stops—[*laughter*]—and suddenly, all the other guys come out of the woodwork. [*Laughter*]

Q. She did hand me the microphone, so I'm going to take this opportunity and first thank you for coming to the Lehigh Valley and listening to us here.

The President. Thank you.

Q. Now, President Obama, I do represent one of the 10 CEOs of manufacturing companies here. I'm third-generation, 59-year family

business. And by the way, I was in Asia when you were, for other reasons, but this—that's a good segue into what I'd like to discuss, and that is, I wasn't going to Asia because I wanted to be there. I was going to Asia because I had to be there.

You know, manufacturing in this country is changing. Companies need to move and change with it.

The President. Right.

Q. Susan's point about the credit markets is really important. The bottom line is that when our companies have an opportunity—you know, years ago we would take a risk, we would go out, we'd buy the capital equipment, we'd add on to our buildings, we'd hire the necessary people to meet that demand. Today, our concern is, are the banks going to be there with us?

The President. Right.

Q. And we don't feel they are. What's going to change here in the near future to help your plan and get these people to work? Because we're willing—you know, those businesses are still here; those families still talk about it. We need the support.

The President. Good. Well, let me talk about the whole financial sector, because it really relates to what's happening in terms of jobs. When we came in, and even before we came in, everybody remembers the Lehman's crash and what happened right before the holiday season last year. The banks, the hedge funds, the whole financial system had leveraged itself so much—and leveraged means that they took one dollar and they turned it into $30, or at least they pretended that it was 30 or $40, and they were just—or $60—they were just going out and lending like crazy, even though they knew that a lot of these loans really made no sense whatsoever.

So they were lending—part of what drove the housing boom was, it used to be you had to save 20 percent to get money down to get your mortgage. Now suddenly people were putting no money down. It used to be that you'd get a fixed mortgage of 30 years, and you'd have a steady payment. Now suddenly you only had to pay interest. You didn't have to pay principal.

So that was just in the housing sector, but there were a whole bunch of other sectors of the economy where the same thing was happening. Now, not only were they giving loans to folks that probably in previous eras wouldn't have qualified for loans, but what was also happening was they were then taking those loans and then selling them, they were packaging them, chopping them up as securities, and those securities then would sell for what they weren't worth. They were being certified as grade A investments when they really weren't. So there was just a lot of funny business going on, on Wall Street, and everybody was participating up and down the line because they were all making a lot of money. And frankly, Washington wasn't doing a very good job regulating.

Now, we saw the consequence of this once everybody realized that a lot of this stuff was bogus, that there was no value beneath a lot of these bank loans. Suddenly everybody started running for the doors. And you could have had a complete collapse of the financial markets.

We stepped in to make sure that you did not have the kind of meltdown that could have definitely gotten us into a great depression. And we did so successfully. And by the way, the interventions we've made have turned out to be actually cheaper than we had predicted and more effective than we had predicted.

I mean, here's a little bit of interesting news. You know, everybody thinks that this bank bailout was about $700 billion. The truth of the matter is, is that most of the money going to the banks will probably end up being paid back with interest, and we've already made about, well, several tens of billions of dollars that go right into—for—to pay off deficits because of some of these investments. So we've been successful in stabilizing the financial markets.

Here's the problem, though—I just wanted to give you that background—here's the problem: Having been way too easy in terms of giving credit, now banks have swung in the opposite direction, and they're not giving any credit to some very credit-worthy businesses. They used to say yes to everything, now they're just saying no to everything.

And part of what our message to the banks is, the taxpayers were there for you to clean up your mistakes, you now have a responsibility to be there for the community now that we're bearing the brunt of a lot of these problems that you caused.

In fairness to some of the banks, what they'll tell you is, "Well, the regulators are telling us we've got to build up our capital reserves. We still have some bad loans on our books. There's still a commercial real estate problem that's out there that we've got to be on the lookout for. That's why we're not as aggressive lending as we used to be."

So what we're hoping to do is to work with them and push as hard as we can to say, look, try to get the right balance here. Don't swing from one end to the other. If there's a manufacturer in Pennsylvania, if there's a business in Ohio that is making profits, that has a good idea, that has a customer base, give them a loan on fair terms. And what we're also saying is, is that the Government is willing to step into the breach in some circumstances to help.

So for example, we've increased our small business lending by about 73 percent through the SBA. That doesn't help everybody that needs help, but it's helping to fill some of the gaps. But I promise you—in fact, I hope to be meeting with the bankers again—I've already met with them a couple of times—sometime before the end of the year to say to them, look, you have a responsibility now, now that we have pulled you back from the brink, to help make sure that Main Street is actually getting the kinds of loans that it needs. And I am optimistic that we can start next year seeing credit flowing a little more effectively than it's been so far. All right?

Okay, last question. Last question. I'm going to go to that guy right there. That guy right there in the blue shirt. There you go. No, no, this one; this one right here. Too many blue shirts here. [*Laughter*] Right here. I was calling—I didn't see you back there, so I was calling on him.

Financial Regulatory Reform

Q. Hi, Mr. President. The gentleman over there, he asked a funny question, so I don't really have anything. I wanted to know if my wife had a question——

The President. Oh, see there.

Q. If not, I'd like to pass it off to this nice woman next to me who really has something to say.

The President. Oh, look at that. All right, go ahead, go ahead. Go ahead.

Q. Mr. President, thank you for coming to Lehigh Valley, and I appreciate you taking up the health care reform. I think it's a very important issue.

My question is actually related to what you just ended on, your point, and that is about the investments going on Wall Street. Are you confident that there have been enough safeguards put in place so that we don't run over that cliff again with these irresponsible, risky investments?

The President. No. I made—here's what happens. Okay, let me say this: Congress works incredibly hard, and you guys have a great congressional delegation. But I think they'll testify to the fact that Congress moves, let's say, deliberately. [*Laughter*] I mean, it takes time to get things done in Congress, and it's—the Senate in particular, just because the way of the rules are constructed. These days you need 60 votes for everything because of the filibuster, which it used to be was applied rarely, but now the opposition just evokes it for everything. I mean, you can be trying to pass a bill to rename a post office, and they'll say, no, we need 60 votes for that and we need 2 weeks of debate.

So the reason I point all this out is, is that financial regulatory reform was one of our top priorities at the beginning of the year. We have now gone through a whole series of committees in the House, and the House has passed out its version. But now the Senate has to pass its version. So it's just like the health care bill. It's the same kind of thing.

I know sometimes the public thinks, what are these folks doing? Well, part of it is, is that you've got three or four or five different committees, all who think that they're in charge of the thing. So they all have hearings, and everybody has to talk, and everybody has got to have their amendments. And then the bill in one House gets merged, and the bill in the other

House gets merged. And, you know, sometimes it gives you a headache just thinking about it, but, look, that's democracy. That's part of what makes our Government stable is, is it's not easy to get anything done. But it's also what makes it frustrating when we have emergency situations.

Now, we have put forward a very specific set of financial reforms that involve making sure that if you've got these really big companies—the JPMorgans or the Goldman Sachses or these companies that have been called "too big to fail"—well, you know what? If you're that big, then you better have a whole bunch of safeguards so that we don't have to bail you out if you make bad mistakes.

And so that's one part of the reform. Another part of the reform is a consumer watchdog that actually has some teeth, because everybody here has a story to tell about a credit card company that suddenly jacks up your rates, or a loan that had a fine print that you didn't understand and there's a balloon payment someplace. We want to make sure that that regulatory framework is much more effective. We want to set in place mechanisms so that if there is a big bank that is getting into trouble, or for that matter an insurance company like AIG that's getting into trouble, that there's a way of essentially quarantining them so that they don't infect the rest of the financial system.

So there are a series of different provisions. And if we get this package passed, then we will have the safeguard in place to make sure this stuff doesn't happen again.

But I want to tell all of you and anybody who's watching or listening, not surprisingly a lot of the banks and the financial institutions are fighting this, because they want to basically just go back to business as usual. They want to do the same things that they were doing. And you're already starting to see some of these bonus payments coming out. It's like suddenly they've forgotten that we had to yank them out of the fire.

And so it is very important that we get financial regulatory reform done. We're hoping that we can get it done early at the beginning of next year, but the banks are going to be pushing back. You're going to start seeing ads. In fact, I think they already started putting out the ads saying, well, you know, florists and bakeries are suddenly going to be subject to financial regulation. Well, that's not true. That's just not true. But it's the same thing we're dealing with, with health care. The insurance and the drug companies start running millions of dollars' worth of ads saying somehow that this is a Government takeover of health care when all we're trying to do is make sure that if you're buying health insurance on the private marketplace that you're not getting gouged and gypped by the insurance companies. So all right?

Okay, I'm going to take one more question from that gentleman back there, because what happened was is that he thought he had been called on, and he felt bad, and it turned out this guy didn't really have a question and—[*laughter*]. So go ahead.

Veterans Administration

Q. Good afternoon, sir. My name is Leonard Martin, and I'm currently a student here at LCCC. I'm also from the Army.

The President. For the Army? Where——

Q. I'm also discharged from the Army, sir.

The President. Appreciate your service.

Q. Yes, sir, 3 years. My question, sir, deals with the Veterans Administration. For example, this week, I've called them several times asking questions about the GI Bill. I'm eligible for the post-9/11 GI bill, but I haven't gotten any benefits from them yet. And when I call them, they are often busy, and we get a message saying that we have to call back later on. Sir, could you call them up and ask them—[*laughter*]—and get more people to work with them so we——

The President. All right. Well, first of all, I will—we will get your name—[*laughter*]—you went straight to the top here, so—[*laughter*]—I suspect somebody will be calling you on your cell phone in about 2 seconds. [*Laughter*]

But more importantly, one of my commitments as President was, we are going to whip the VA into shape because when our men and women are serving on behalf of all of us, we've

got a solemn obligation to look after them when they come home. And this 9/11—post-9/11 GI bill, I think, is a great example of it. My grandfather fought in World War II, and then he got his college education on the GI bill. It wasn't just good for him. Because of that whole greatest generation going to college, that built our middle class. And all the things that we've been talking about in terms of science and technology and innovation and clean energy, all that depends on what happens in a place like Lehigh, making sure that people are being trained and constantly upgrading their skills for the future.

So that's what the GI bill's supposed to do. Now, the VA—we've actually increased the budget for the VA by 11 percent last year, which was the largest increase in 30 years, and we'll be increasing it again this year, because we think it's important to play some catchup. Rick Shinseki, who's a great American hero and now the Secretary of the VA, one of his tasks is to upgrade a bunch of the old systems in the VA. The truth of the matter is, you shouldn't have to make a phone call. You should be able to get online. That would be more efficient. And what that tells me is—I mean, the fact that you're having to make the call tells me that we have not fully upgraded our information systems yet the way they need to be upgraded.

But he is really working diligently. We had a lot of work to do on this front. The VA had been somewhat underfunded for a number of years despite the growing amount of demand caused by returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. We are, I think, going to get it in a good place by the time I'm through in Washington. But in the meantime, you'll, I promise, get a return phone call.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:54 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Eric E. Schmidt, chief executive officer, Google, Inc.; and President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea.

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama and President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia on the Expiration of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
December 4, 2009

Recognizing our mutual determination to support strategic stability between the United States of America and the Russian Federation, we express our commitment, as a matter of principle, to continue to work together in the spirit of the START Treaty following its expiration, as well as our firm intention to ensure that a new treaty on strategic arms enter into force at the earliest possible date.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

The President's Weekly Address
December 5, 2009

Every month since January, when I became your President, I've spoken to you about the periodic reports of the Labor Department on the number of jobs created or lost during the previous month; numbers that tell a story about how America's economy is faring overall.

In those first months, the numbers were nothing short of devastating. The worst recession since the 1930s had wreaked havoc on the lives of so many of our fellow Americans. Yesterday the numbers released by the Labor Department reflected a continuing positive trend of diminishing job loss.

But for those who were laid off last month and the millions of Americans who have lost their jobs in this recession, a good trend isn't good enough. Trends don't buy the groceries. Trends don't pay the rent or a college tuition. Trends don't fulfill the need within each of us to be productive, to provide for our families, to make the most of our lives, to reach for our dreams.

So it's true that we, as a country, are in a very different place than we were when 2009 began. Because of the Recovery Act and a number of other steps we've taken, we're no longer facing the potential collapse of our financial system or a second great depression. We're no longer losing jobs at a rate of 700,000 a month, and our economy's growing for the first time in a year.

But too many of our neighbors are still out of work because the growth we've seen hasn't yet translated into all the jobs we need. Stung by this brutal recession, businesses that have kept their doors open are still wary about adding workers. Instead of hiring, many are simply asking their employees to work more hours, or they're adding temporary help.

History tells us this is usually what happens with recessions: Even as the economy grows, it takes time for jobs to follow. But the folks who've been looking for work without any luck for months and, in some cases, years, can't wait any longer. For them, I'm determined to do everything I can to accelerate our progress so we're actually adding jobs again.

That's why this week I invited a group of business owners from all across the country to the White House to talk about additional steps we can take to help jump-start hiring. We brought together unions and universities to talk about what we can do to support our workers today and prepare our students to outcompete workers around the world tomorrow. We brought together mayors and community leaders to talk about how we can open up new opportunities in our cities and towns.

On Friday, I spent the day in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and met with workers and small-business owners there. I stopped by a steel company called Allentown Metal Works and spoke at Lehigh Community College. I visited folks at a job placement center and stopped by a shift change at Alpo. The stories and concerns I heard mirrored the countless letters I receive every single day. And they speak louder than any statistic or government report. The folks in Allentown, and in all the Allentowns across our country, are the most dedicated, productive workers in the world; all they're asking for is a chance and a fair shake. And that's exactly what I'm working to give them.

In the coming days, I'll be unveiling additional ideas aimed at accelerating job growth and hiring as we emerge from this economic storm. And so that we don't face another crisis like this again, I am determined to meet our responsibility to do what we know will strengthen our economy in the long run. That's why I'm not going to let up in my efforts to reform our health care system, to give our children the best education in the world, to promote the jobs of tomorrow and energy independence by investing in a clean energy economy, and to deal with the mounting Federal debt.

From the moment I was sworn into office, we have taken a number of difficult steps to end this economic crisis. We didn't take them because they were popular or gratifying—they weren't. We took these steps because they were necessary. But I didn't run for President to pass emergency recovery programs or to bail out banks or to shore up auto companies. I didn't run for President simply to manage the crisis of the moment, while kicking our most pressing problems down the road. I ran for President to help hard-working families succeed and to stand up for the embattled middle class. I ran to fight for a country where responsibility is still rewarded and hard-working people can get ahead. I ran to keep faith with the sacred American principle that we will deliver to our children a future of even greater possibility.

And my commitment to you, the American people, is that I will focus every single day on how we can get people back to work, and how we can build an economy that continues to make real the promise of America for generations to come.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 1:50 p.m. on December 3 in Room 236 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building for broadcast on December 5. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 4, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on December 5.

Remarks at the Kennedy Center Honors Reception
December 6, 2009

The President. Thank you. On behalf of Michelle and myself, welcome to the White House.

Child in audience. Thank you.

The President. Thank you. [*Laughter*] This is a season of joy, tradition, and celebration.

Child in audience. Yay!

The President. Yes! [*Laughter*] And today it is our great joy to continue a White House holiday tradition, a celebration of performers who have transformed the arts in America, our extraordinary Kennedy Center Honorees.

We are joined by Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Members of Congress, and members of the Kennedy family. I see sprinkled through the crowd some pretty fancy company as well. You've got the Queen of Soul; you've got Martin Scorsese, he knows a little bit about filmmaking; and my spectacular First Lady is here as well.

I especially want to thank the man who created these honors more than three decades ago and who has produced them ever since—and whom I was proud to name as cochair of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities—George Stevens, Jr.—George.

And I want to also thank Stephen Schwarzman and the Kennedy Center trustees, as well as President Michael Kaiser and all those who sustain President Kennedy's vision of a "great stage" celebrating "the best coming from this country and abroad."

These performers are indeed the best. They are also living reminders of a simple truth—and I'm going to steal a line from Michelle here—the arts are not somehow apart from our national life, the arts are at the heart of our national life.

In times of war and sacrifice, the arts and these artists remind us to sing and to laugh and to live. In times of plenty, they challenge our conscience and implore us to remember the least among us. In moments of division or doubt, they compel us to see the common values that we share, the ideals to which we aspire, even if we sometimes fall short. In days of hardship, they renew our hope that brighter days are still ahead.

So let's never forget that art strengthens America. And that's why we're making sure that America strengthens its arts. It's why we're reenergizing the National Endowment of the Arts. That's why we're helping to sustain jobs in arts communities across the country. It's why we're supporting arts education in our schools, and why Michelle and I have hosted students here at the White House to experience the best of American poetry and music. And it's why we're honored to celebrate these five remarkable performers who for decades have helped to sustain and strengthen the American spirit.

You can't understand America without understanding jazz. And you can't understand jazz, without understanding Dave Brubeck. His mother was a classical pianist with high hopes for her son. And by the time he was 4, he was playing himself. But by the time he was a teenager, he was tearing up local honky-tonks. Even his mother had to admit: "There is some hope for David after all." [*Laughter*]

And perhaps it was World War II—his service in Patton's army—that changed his sound, forcing him, as he said, to work the war out of his system by playing some "pretty vicious piano." Whatever it was, his sound, the distinctive harmonies and improvisations of the Dave Brubeck Quartet, would change jazz forever, prompting Time magazine to put him on the cover as the leader of a new jazz age.

Having brought jazz into the mainstream, he then transformed it with innovative new rhythms on albums like "Time Out," the first jazz album to ever sell more than a million copies and still one of the best-selling jazz albums of all time.

Dave Brubeck has never stopped reaching new audiences: performing for Presidents from Johnson to Reagan, composing orchestral tributes to Martin Luther King and Pope John Paul II, and even in his eighties, dazzling jazz festivals across America.

And I know personally how powerful his performances can be. I mentioned this to Dave

backstage: In the few weeks that I spent with my father as a child—he came to visit me for about a month when I was young—one of the things he did was to take me to my first jazz concert, in Honolulu, Hawaii, in 1971, and it was a Dave Brubeck concert. [*Laughter*] And I've been a jazz fan ever since. The world that he opened up for a 10-year-old boy was spectacular.

And Dave, for the joy that you've given millions of jazz lovers like me, for your six decades of revolutionary rhythms, you are rightly honored, especially today, on your 89th birthday. [*Applause*]

He was born Melvin Kaminsky——

Mel Brooks. He never understood 4/4 time. [*Laughter*]

The President. He's still messing it up, Mel. [*Laughter*] Mel, I'm trying to say something nice about you, now. [*Laughter*] Please don't upstage me. [*Laughter*]

As you can tell, he was born to entertain. [*Laughter*] Or as Mel Brooks explains it: "Look at Jewish history—unrelieved lamenting would be intolerable. [*Laughter*] So every 10 Jews, God designed 1 to be crazy and amuse the others." [*Laughter*] According to Mel, "By the time I was 5, I knew I was that one." [*Laughter*]

And by the time he was 9, this boy from Brooklyn had seen his first musical and dreamed of becoming the King of Broadway. But World War II meant service in the Army, or, as he put it, "the European Theater of Operations, with lots of operations and very little theater." [*Laughter*] Returning home, he found success cranking out quips for Sid Caesar, or as Mel described his reaction to success, "panic, hysteria, insomnia . . . and years of psychoanalysis." [*Laughter*]

That's right, we're reading back all your golden moments here, Mel. [*Laughter*]

Unfortunately, many of the punch lines that have defined Mel Brooks's success cannot be repeated here. [*Laughter*] I was telling him that I went to see "Blazing Saddles"—[*laughter*]—when I was 10. And he pointed out that, I think, according to the ratings, I should not have been allowed in the theater. [*Laughter*] That's true. I think I had a fake ID. [*Laughter*] But the statute of limitations has passed. [*Laughter*]

Suffice it to say, in his satires and parodies, no cow is sacred, no genre is safe. He mocked the musical—and Hitler—in "The Producers," the western in "Blazing Saddles," and the horror film in "Young Frankenstein."

But behind all the insanity and absurdity, there's been a method to Mel's madness. He's described his work as "unearthing the truth that is all around us." And by illuminating uncomfortable truths about racism and sexism and anti-Semitism, he's been called "our jester, asking us to see ourselves as we really are, determined that we laugh ourselves sane."

For this, he is one of the few people ever to receive an Emmy and a Grammy and an Oscar and a Tony. Writer, director, actor, producer, composer, for his success, and for his psychoanalysis, we honor Mel Brooks.

Reflecting on the challenge of finding one's voice, Grace Bumbry once said: "God has already planted that in your throat. It's your job to free it up, to allow that beautiful thing to shine through."

True to her name, Grace allowed her voice to shine through and touch all those within its range: around her family's piano in St. Louis; on the talent show where, as a teenager, she moved the host to tears; and then, after being turned away from one music school because of the color of her skin, her triumphant international debut at the Paris Opera when she was just 23 years old.

With a pitch and presence like no other, she became a global sensation, moving audiences at the great opera houses of the world. And performing here at the White House, it was said that she moved Jacqueline Kennedy to lean over and gently sing along the words to the President.

Defying every expectation, Grace Bumbry then made the transition from mezzo to soprano. And over the decades that followed, she displayed a range like few others, sometimes the middle ranges as a mezzo, sometimes the highs of a soprano, sometimes both in the same performance. Grace not only triumphed in different techniques, she transformed them.

And though she gave her final operatic performance in 1997, she appears in recitals to this day. After nearly 50 years, she remains the definition of a diva in the classical sense: a divine voice worthy of the heavens. And tonight, 32 years after she performed at the first Kennedy Center Honors for her mentor Marian Anderson, we honor Grace Bumbry.

Growing up in New York City's Little Italy, Bobby De Niro always knew what he wanted to be. Coming home from the movies, he'd act out the parts. At age 10, in his school play, he made a rather unlikely debut in "The Wizard of Oz" as the Cowardly Lion. [*Laughter*]

He has said, "My joy as an actor is to live different lives." And in more than 60 films spanning more than 40 years, Robert De Niro has lived some of the most iconic and intense characters ever portrayed on film: a dying baseball player in "Bang The Drum Slowly," a young Vito Corleone in "The Godfather Part II," a deranged "Taxi Driver," a troubled veteran in "The Deer Hunter," a brutal boxer in "Raging Bull," a vengeful ex-con in "Cape Fear." Let's hope that Martin Scorsese was kidding when he said that Robert is "full of something that he wanted to express." [*Laughter*] Don't worry, we did a vet on him before he came in tonight. [*Laughter*]

But alongside his Oscar-winning emotional audacity there's his versatility, from a coma patient in "Awakenings," to an ever possessive father in "Meet the Parents." There's his legendary method, not simply portraying characters, but becoming them emotionally and physically, and there is his love for his city, whether it's directing films like "A Bronx Tale" or founding the film center and festival that has energized the arts in New York City.

It is perhaps the great irony of his life—one of America's greatest cinematic actors is a man, famously, of few words off the screen, and I can attest to this. [*Laughter*] So I'll simply say, thank you, Robert De Niro.

Finally, we honor the quiet kid from Jersey—[*laughter*]—who grew up to become the rock 'n' roll laureate of a generation. For in the life of our country, only a handful of people have tapped the full power of music to tell the real American story with honesty, from the heart, and one of those people is Bruce Springsteen.

He has said: "I've always believed that people listen to your music not to find out about you, but to find out about themselves." And for more than three decades, in his songs of dreams and despair, of struggle and hope, hard-working folks have seen themselves.

They've seen their great State of New Jersey, and they've seen their America in songs that become anthems: restless kids who were "Born to Run," the struggles of workers in "My Hometown," the sacrifices of vets who were "Born in the U.S.A.," love and loss in "Streets of Philadelphia," a resilient nation in "The Rising," and, this year, a country "Working on a Dream."

It's no wonder that his tours are not so much concerts, but communions. There's a place for everybody, the sense that no matter who you are or what you do, everyone deserves their shot at the American Dream, everybody deserves a little bit of dignity; everybody deserves to be heard.

I've seen it myself. Bruce was a great fan—a great friend over the last year, and when I watched him on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial when he rocked the National Mall before my Inauguration, I thought it captured, as well as anything, the spirit of what America should be about. On a day like that, and today, I remember: I'm the President, but he's "The Boss." [*Laughter*]

And Bruce continues to inspire, along with his house-rocking, earth-shaking E Street Band. At 60 years old, he's still filling stadiums, still whipping fans into a frenzy, still surfing the crowd, still jumping off pianos, and still reaching new fans, and still being nominated for Grammys. It's been a long road from that stage at Stone Pony in Asbury Park to this stage today, but this much we know, after more than 30 years and 120 million albums sold, Bruce Springsteen is still one "cool rockin' Daddy." [*Laughter*]

Dave Brubeck, Mel Brooks, Grace Bumbry, Robert De Niro, Bruce Springsteen, their stories are their own. But the part that they play in the larger American story, that's what we honor here tonight. What they say is that with respect for the past, we can keep strong the traditions

and values that enrich us all; that with confidence in the present, and in ourselves, we can overcome whatever comes our way; and that with faith in the future, America's greatest "Glory Days" are still to come.

So thank you to all of our honorees. Thank you all very much for the joy and the beauty that you've contributed to our lives. We are very grateful. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:28 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainer Aretha Franklin; filmmaker Martin Scorsese; and comedian Sid Caesar.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey and an Exchange With Reporters

December 7, 2009

President Obama. I want to extend the warmest of welcomes to Prime Minister Erdogan. I'm glad that I, personally, and the American people have a chance to reciprocate the wonderful hospitality that was extended to me when I visited Turkey in April.

As I said when I had the great honor of addressing the Turkish Parliament in Ankara, I am strongly committed to creating the best possible relationship between the Turkish—between Turkey and the United States.

Turkey is a NATO ally, which means that we are pledged to defend each other. There are strong ties between our countries as a consequence of the Turkish American community that has been established here. We have had the opportunity to work together during this recent financial crisis, given Turkey's role as a member of the G–20. And given Turkey's history as a secular democratic state that respects the rule of law, but is also a majority Muslim nation, it plays a critical role, I think, in helping to shape mutual understanding and stability and peace not only in its neighborhood but around the world.

During the course of our discussions here, we've had the opportunity to survey a wide range of issues that both the United States and Turkey are concerned about. I thanked Prime Minister Erdogan and the Turkish people for their outstanding contributions to stabilizing Afghanistan. We discussed our joint role in helping Iraq achieve the kind of independence and prosperity that, I think, has been advanced as a consequence of the election law finally being passed over the weekend.

We discussed issues of regional peace, and I indicated to the Prime Minister how important it is to resolve the issue of Iran's nuclear capacity in a way that allows Iran to pursue peaceful nuclear energy but provides assurances that it will abide by international rules and norms, and I believe that Turkey can be an important player in trying to move Iran in that direction.

And we discussed the continuing role that we can play as NATO allies in strengthening Turkey's profile within NATO and coordinating more effectively on critical issues like missile defense.

I also congratulated the Prime Minister on some courageous steps that he has taken around the issue of normalizing Turkish-Armenian relations and encouraged him to continue to move forward along this path.

We reaffirmed the shared commitment to defeat terrorist activity regardless of where it occurs. I expressed condolences to the Prime Minister and the Turkish people for the recent terrorist attack that was taken there and pledged U.S. support in trying to bring the perpetrators of this violence to justice.

And finally, I complimented the Prime Minister for the steps that he's taken, often very difficult steps, in reintegrating religious minorities and ethnic minorities within Turkey into the democratic and political process and indicated to him that we want to be as supportive as possible in further steps that he can take, for example, assuring the continuation of the Halki Seminary and addressing the vital needs of continuing the Ecumenical Patriarchy within Turkey.

Overall, just to summarize, I am incredibly optimistic about the prospect of stronger and stronger ties between the United States and Turkey that will be based not only on our NATO relationship, our military-to-military relationship, our strategic relationship, but also increasing economic ties.

And one of the concrete outcomes of this trip is to follow through on discussions that I had with both Prime Minister Erdogan and President Gul in Turkey to stand up a strategic working group around economic issues and improving commercial ties. That will be launched with the participation of Secretary of Commerce Locke and our U.S. Trade Representative, Ambassador Ron Kirk, along with Turkish counterparts. And we think that there is enormous potential for us to grow trade and commercial ties between the two countries.

Turkey is a great country. It is growing in influence around the world. And I am pleased that America can call Turkey a friend, and I'm pleased that I'm able to call Prime Minister Erdogan personally a friend. I'm grateful for his trip here and look forward to many years of collaboration with him to serve both the prosperity of the American people and the Turkish people.

Thank you.

Prime Minister Erdogan. Thank you very much. I'm very grateful for the hospitality that both myself and my delegation have been shown since our arrival here. And I would like to once again express my thanks for that hospitality.

The fact that the President visited Turkey on his first overseas trip and that he described and characterized Turkish-U.S. relations as a model partnership has been very important for us politically and in the process that we all look forward to in the future as well. And important steps are now being taken in order to continue to build on our bilateral relations so as to give greater meaning to the term model partnership. Of course, there are many sides to the development of this relationship, be it in the economic area, in the areas of science, art, technology, political areas, and military areas.

We have also appointed two people from our side to act as counterparts in order to liaise with their American counterparts to continue on this process. Those two people are the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Ali Babacan, and the Minister of State responsible for economic affairs, Mr. Zafer Caglayan, on the Turkish side. I do believe that this group is going to work to take the Turkish-American relations forward, not just in the economic area but in all areas in general.

We, of course, have—we take joint steps on regional issues. This is in the Middle East, in Iraq, with respect to the Iranian nuclear program. We continue to have joint activity in Afghanistan, and the Turkish Armed Forces have taken over the command of the forces there for a third time with the additional support that we have sent to Afghanistan in the last couple months. And there are steps that we have taken with respect to training activity and other activities in the context of provisional reconstruction teams, and we continue on that. We've had an opportunity to continue discussing those issues during our visit here.

Another important area, of course, is energy. Turkey is a transit country for energy issues. And the agreement has been signed for Nabucco, and we are ready to take some important steps with respect to Nabucco.

We continue to talk with Azerbaijan. I do believe that positive progress will be made in this area. In addition to Azerbaijan, of course, there is the importance of companies like Statoil, Total, and British Petroleum and others.

We have also discussed relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia, which is of great importance. This is important in the context of Turkish-Armenian relations. We have discussed the Minsk Group and what the Minsk Group can do—the United States, Russia, and France—to add more impetus to that process. I can say that to have more impetus in the Minsk process is going to have a very positive impact on the overall process, because the normalization process between Turkey and Armenia is very much related to these issues. As the administration in Turkey, we are determined to move forward in this area.

Another important issue with respect to—for us in Turkey is the fight against terrorism. And there was a statement that was made in this very room on the 5th of November 2007, which was

very important in that context, because at the time we had declared the separatist terrorist organization as the common enemy of the United States, Turkey, and Iraq, because terrorism is the enemy of all mankind.

Our sensitivity and response to terrorism is what we have displayed when the Twin Towers were hit here in the United States. Wherever a terrorist act takes place, our reaction is always the same, because terrorism does not have a religion, a homeland. They have no homeland, no religion whatsoever.

We have also had opportunity to discuss what we can do jointly in the region with regard to nuclear programs. We as Turkey stand ready to do whatever we can to ensure a diplomatic solution to the nuclear issue in our region. And we stand ready as Turkey to do whatever we can do with respect to relations between Israel and the Palestinians, and Israel and Syria, because I do believe that, first and foremost, the United States too has important responsibility in trying to achieve global peace.

And we too must lend all kinds of support that we can in our regions and—in our respective regions and in the world in general in trying to achieve global peace, because this is not the time to make enemies, it's the time to make friends. And I believe that we must move hand in hand towards a bright future.

Thank you once again.

President Obama. Thank you.

All right, where's Ben Feller [Associated Press]? There you are.

National Economy

Q. Thank you, sir. I'd like to ask you briefly about a domestic issue, that being the economy, heading to your speech tomorrow. Do you support the use of Federal bailout money to fund job creation programs? Is that an appropriate use of that money? Is that something that you plan to support tomorrow?

President Obama. You know, Ben, it would be a mistake for me to step on my speech tomorrow by giving you the headline today.

Q. Not that big a mistake. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. But let me speak generally about what we've seen. On Friday, we got the best jobs report that we've gotten in a very long time. And it significantly beat expectations. At minimum, it showed that for all practical purposes, we've stopped losing jobs. And that's consistent with the fact that in the third quarter we saw the economy grow.

My first job when I came into office was to make sure that we got the financial crisis under control and that we tried to limit the devastating effects that it was having on the real economy. We have had a very tough year, and we've lost millions of jobs. But at least now we are moving in the right direction.

What my speech tomorrow will focus on is the fact that having gotten the financial crisis under control, having finally moved into positive territory when it comes to economic growth, our biggest challenge now is making sure that job growth matches up with economic growth. And what we've seen is, is that companies shed jobs very quickly, partly induced by the panic of what was happening on Wall Street, and they are still tentative about hiring back all those people who were laid off. Also what we're seeing is some long-term trends where companies are becoming so efficient in terms of productivity that they may feel that they can produce the same amount of goods or services without as many employees. So those present some particular challenges, given the fact that we lost over 3 million jobs just in the first quarter of this year before any of the steps we took had a chance to take effect.

With respect to TARP specifically, I think you saw stories today and you've seen stories over the last several weeks that TARP has turned out to be much cheaper than we had expected, although not cheap. It means that some of that money can devoted—be devoted to deficit reduction. And the question is are there selective approaches that are consistent with the original goals of TARP—for example, making sure that small businesses are still getting lending—that would be appropriate in accelerating job growth?

And I will be addressing that tomorrow. But I do think that, although we've stabilized the financial system, one of the problems that we're still seeing all the time—and I heard about it when it was in Allentown just this past week—was the fact that small businesses and

some medium-sized businesses are still feeling a huge credit crunch. They cannot get the loans that they need to make capital investments that would allow them to then expand employment. And so that's a particular area where we might be able to make a difference. Okay?

Do we have—are you—is there somebody in the Turkish delegation that wants to call on a reporter?

Kurdistan Workers Party/Iraq

Q. Mr. President, is there any new and concrete U.S. action plan for disarmament and the elimination of the PKK terror organization in northern Iraq? Thank you, sir.

President Obama. Well, what the Prime Minister and I have discussed is coordinating closely in dealing with the problem of the PKK. We have stated before, and I have reaffirmed since I came into office, that the United States considers PKK a terrorist organization and that the threat that it poses not only in Turkey but also in Iraq is one that is of deep concern. And as NATO allies we are bound to help each other defend our territories. More broadly, I think that it is important for us to have a consistent position with respect to terrorism wherever it takes place.

So we've discussed how we can coordinate militarily. I will tell you that with respect to the issue of the PKK, I think that the steps that the Prime Minister has taken in being inclusive towards the Kurdish community in Turkey is very helpful, because one of the things we understand is, is that terrorism cannot just be dealt with militarily, there is also social and political components to it that have to be recognized.

With respect to Iraq, I think the degree to which the Kurdish population within Iraq feels effectively represented within the central Government in Baghdad, to the extent that we can resolve some long-term, pressing issues like Kirkuk, the more I think that Kurds will recognize that their interests are not in supporting any kind of military activity but rather in working through conflicts politically, in a way that allows everybody to be prosperous. And that's the kind of process that we would encourage.

Okay? Thank you very much, everybody. Happy holidays.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:25 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Prime Minister Erdogan spoke in Turkish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks on the National Economy
December 8, 2009

Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat. Thank you so much, Strobe, for your extraordinary leadership here at Brookings, and thanks to all of you in attendance.

Almost exactly 1 year ago, on a frigid winter's day, I met with my new economic team at the headquarters of my Presidential transition offices in Chicago. And over the course of 4 hours, my advisers presented an analysis of where the economy at that time stood, accompanied by a chilling set of charts and graphs predicting where we might end up. It was an unforgettable series of presentations.

Christy Romer—who's here today—tapped to head the Council of Economic Advisers, as well as Larry Summers, who I'd chosen to head the National Economic Council, described an imminent downturn comparable in its severity to almost nothing since the 1930s. Tim Geithner, my incoming Treasury Secretary, reported that the financial system, shaken by the subprime crisis, had halted almost all lending, which in turn threatened to pull the broader economy in a downward spiral. Peter Orszag, my incoming Budget Director, closed out the proceedings with an entirely dismal report on the fiscal health of the country, with growing deficits and debt stretching to the horizon. Now, having concluded that it was too late for me to request a recount—[*laughter*]—I tasked my team with mapping out a plan to tackle the crisis on all fronts.

It wasn't long after that meeting, as we shaped this economic plan, that we began to see

some of these forecasts materialize. Over the previous year, it was obvious that folks were facing hard times. As I traveled across the country during the long campaign, I would meet men and women bearing the brunt of not only a deepening recession but also years, even decades, of growing strains on middle class families. But now the country was experiencing something far worse. Our gross domestic product, the sum total of all that our economy produces, fell at the fastest rate in a quarter century. Five trillion dollars of Americans' household wealth evaporated in just 12 weeks as stocks, pensions, and home values plummeted. We were losing an average of 700,000 jobs each month, equivalent to the population of the State of Vermont. That was true in December, January, February, March. The fear among economists across the political spectrum that was—was that we were rapidly plummeting towards a second great depression.

So in the weeks and months that followed, we undertook a series of difficult steps to prevent that outcome. And we were forced to take those steps largely without the help of an opposition party, which, unfortunately, after having presided over the decisionmaking that had led to the crisis, decided to hand it over to others to solve.

We acted to get lending flowing again so businesses could get loans to buy equipment and ordinary Americans could get financing to buy homes and cars, to go to college, and to start or run businesses. We enacted measures to stem the tide of foreclosures in our housing market, helping responsible homeowners stay in their homes and helping to stop the broader decline in home values which was eating away at what tends to be a family's largest asset.

To achieve this and to prevent economic collapse, we were forced to extend assistance to some of the very banks and financial institutions whose actions had helped precipitate the turmoil. We also took steps to prevent the rapid dissolution of the American auto industry, which faced a crisis partly of its own making, to prevent the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs during an already fragile, shaky time. Now, these were not decisions that were popular or satisfying; these were decisions that were necessary.

Now, even as we worked to address the crises in our banking sector, in our housing market, and in our auto industry, we also began attacking our economic crisis on a broader front. Less than 1 month after taking office, we enacted the most sweeping economic recovery package in history: the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The Recovery Act was divided into three parts. One-third went for tax relief for small businesses and 95 percent of working families. Another third was for emergency relief to help folks who've borne the brunt of this recession. We extended or increased unemployment benefits for more than 17 million Americans; made health insurance 65 percent cheaper for families relying on COBRA. And for State and local governments facing historic budget shortfalls as demand for services went up and revenues went down, we provided assistance that has saved the jobs of hundreds of thousands of teachers and public school workers, firefighters and police officers.

The last third of the Recovery Act is for investments to put Americans to work doing the work that America needs done: doubling our capacity in renewable energy like wind and solar, computerizing medical records to save money and lives, providing the largest boost to medical research in history, renovating classrooms and school laboratories, and upgrading roads and railways as part of the largest investment in infrastructure since the creation of the Interstate Highway System half a century ago.

And even as the Recovery Act has created jobs and spurred growth, we have not let up in our efforts to take every responsible action to get the economy growing and America working.

This fall, I signed into law more than $30 billion in tax cuts for struggling businesses, extended an effective tax credit for homebuyers, and provided additional unemployment insurance for 1 million Americans. And the Treasury is continuing to adapt our financial stability plan, helping to facilitate the flow of small credit to small businesses and families. In addition, we're working to break down barriers

and open overseas markets so our companies can better compete globally, creating jobs in America by exporting our products around the world.

Now, partly as a result of these and other steps, we are in a very different place today than we were 1 year ago. We may forget, but we're in a very different place. We can safely say that we are no longer facing the potential collapse of our financial system, and we've avoided the depression many feared. Our economy is growing for the first time in a year, and the swing from contraction to expansion since the beginning of the year is the largest in nearly three decades.

Finally, we're no longer seeing the severe deterioration in the job market that we once were. In fact, we learned on Friday that the unemployment rate fell slightly last month. Now, this is welcome news, and news made possible in part by the up to 1.6 million jobs that the Recovery Act has already created and saved according to the Congressional Budget Office.

But I'm here today because our work is far from done. For even though we've reduced the deluge of job losses to a relative trickle, we are not yet creating jobs at a pace to help all those families who've been swept up in the flood. There are more than 7 million fewer Americans with jobs today than when this recession began. That's a staggering figure, and one that reflects not only the depths of the hole from which we must ascend but also a continuing human tragedy.

It was mentioned that I was in Allentown, Pennsylvania, this past weekend and went to a job center where people were engaged in job search. And it ran the spectrum: Blacks, Whites, Hispanics, young people who were just starting their careers, individuals 50, 60 years old, looking for a job. And they were putting a brave face on it, confident that eventually things would work out, but you could also see the sense of anxiety, the fear that perhaps this time it was different. And sometimes it's hard to break out of the bubble here in Washington and remind ourselves that behind these statistics are people's lives, their capacity to do right by their families. It speaks to an urgent need to accelerate job growth in the short term while laying a new foundation for lasting economic growth.

So my economic team has been considering a full range of additional ideas to help accelerate the pace of private sector hiring. We held a jobs forum at the White House that brought together small-business owners, CEOs, union members, economists, folks from nonprofits, and State and local officials to talk about job creation. And I've asked people to lead forums in their own communities, sending the results to me, so we are hearing as many voices as possible as we refine our proposals. And we've already heard a number of good ideas, and I know we'll learn of many more.

So today I want to outline some of the broader steps that I believe should be at the heart of our effort to accelerate job growth, those areas that will generate the greatest number of jobs while generating the greatest value for our economy.

Now, first, we're proposing a series of steps to help small businesses grow and hire new staff. Over the past 15 years, small businesses have created roughly 65 percent of all new jobs in America. These are companies formed around kitchen tables in family meetings, formed when an entrepreneur takes a chance on a dream, formed when a worker decides it's time she became her own boss. These are also companies that drive innovation, producing 13 times more patents per employee than large companies. And it's worth remembering, every once in a while a small business becomes a big business and changes the world.

And that's why it's so important that we help small business struggling to stay open, or struggling to open in the first place during these difficult times. Building on the tax cuts in the Recovery Act, we're proposing a complete elimination of capital gains taxes on small-business investment along with an extension of writeoffs to encourage small businesses to expand in the coming year. And I believe it's worthwhile to create a tax incentive to encourage small businesses to add and keep employees, and I'm going to work with Congress to pass one.

Now, these steps will help, but we also have to address the continuing struggle of small businesses to get loans that they need to start up and grow. To that end, we're proposing to waive fees and increase the guarantees for SBA-backed

loans. And I'm asking my Treasury Secretary to continue mobilizing the remaining TARP funds to facilitate lending to small businesses.

Second, we're proposing a boost in investment in the Nation's infrastructure beyond what was included in the Recovery Act to continue modernizing our transportation and communications networks. These are needed public works that engage private sector companies, spurring hiring all across the country.

Already, more than 10,000 of these projects have been funded through the Recovery Act. And by design, Recovery Act work on roads, bridges, water systems, Superfund sites, broadband networks, and clean energy projects will all be ramping up in the months ahead. It was planned this way for two reasons: so the impact would be felt over a 2-year period and, more importantly, because we wanted to do this right.

The potential for abuse in a program of this magnitude, while operating at such a fast pace, was enormous. So I asked Vice President Biden and others to make sure to the extent humanly possible that the investments were sound, the projects worthy, and the execution efficient. What this means is that we're going to see even more work—and workers—on recovery projects in the next 6 months than we saw in the last 6 months.

Even so, there are many more worthy projects than there were dollars to fund them. I recognize that by their nature, these projects often take time and will therefore create jobs over time. But the need for jobs will also last beyond next year, and the benefits of these investments will last years beyond that. So adding to this initiative to rebuild America's infrastructure is the right thing to do.

Third, I'm calling on Congress to consider a new program to provide incentives for consumers who retrofit their homes to become more energy efficient, which we know creates jobs, saves money for families, and reduces the pollution that threatens our environment. And I'm proposing that we expand select Recovery Act initiatives to promote energy efficiency and clean energy jobs, which have been proven to be particularly popular and effective.

It's a positive sign that many of these programs drew so many applicants for funding that a lot of strong proposals, proposals that will leverage private capital and create jobs quickly, did not make the cut. With additional resources, in areas like advanced manufacturing of wind turbines and solar panels, for instance, we can help turn good ideas into good private sector jobs.

Finally, as we are moving forward in these areas, we should also extend the relief in the Recovery Act, including emergency assistance to seniors, unemployment insurance benefits, COBRA, and relief to States and localities to prevent layoffs. This will help folks weathering these storms, while boosting consumer spending and promoting job growth.

Of course, there's only so much government can do. Job creation will ultimately depend on the real job creators: businesses across America. We were encouraged today to hear from the Business Roundtable that their survey showed greater confidence and greater potential investment coming out of the business community.

Government can help lay the groundwork on which the private sector can better generate jobs, growth, and innovation. After all, small-business tax relief is not a substitute for ingenuity and industriousness by our entrepreneurs, but it can help those with good ideas to grow and expand. Incentives to promote energy efficiency and clean energy manufacturing don't automatically create jobs or lower carbon emissions, but these steps provide a framework in which companies can compete and innovate to create those jobs and reduce energy consumption. And while modernizing the physical and virtual networks that connect us will create private sector jobs, they'll do so while making it possible for companies to more easily and effectively move their products across this country, around the world, and that will create more jobs.

And given the challenges of accelerating the pace of hiring in the private sector, these targeted initiatives are right, and they are needed. But with a fiscal crisis to match our economic crisis, we also must be prudent about how we fund it. So to help support these

efforts, we are going to wind down the Troubled Asset Relief Program, or TARP, the fund created to stabilize the financial system so banks would lend again.

I don't think I have to tell you there has rarely been a less loved or more necessary emergency program than TARP, which, as galling as the assistance to banks may have been, indisputably helped prevent a collapse of the entire financial system. Launched hastily—understandably, but hastily—under the last administration, the TARP program was flawed, and we have worked hard to correct those flaws and manage it properly. And today, TARP has served its original purpose and at much lower cost than we expected.

In fact, because of our stewardship of this program and the transparency and accountability we put in place, TARP is expected to cost the taxpayers at least $200 billion less than what was anticipated just this past summer. And the assistance to banks, once thought to cost taxpayers untold billions, is on track to actually reap billions in profits for the taxpaying public. So this gives us a chance to pay down the deficit faster than we thought possible and to shift funds that would have gone to help the banks on Wall Street to help create jobs on Main Street.

Small business, infrastructure, clean energy, these are areas in which we can put Americans to work, while putting our Nation on a sturdier economic footing. And that foundation for sustained economic growth, that must be our continued focus and our ultimate goal.

I've said this before. Even before this particular crisis, much of our growth for a decade or more had been fueled by unsustainable consumer debt and reckless financial speculation, while we ignored the fundamental challenges that hold the key to our economic prosperity. We cannot simply go back to the way things used to be. We can't go back to an economy that yielded cycle after cycle of speculative booms and painful busts. We can't continue to accept an education system in which our students trail their peers in other countries, and a health care system in which exploding costs put our businesses at a competitive disadvantage. And we cannot continue to ignore the clean energy challenge or cede global leadership in the emerging industries of the 21st century. And that's why, even as we strive to meet the crisis of the moment, we have insisted on laying a new foundation for the future.

Because an educated workforce is essential to a 21st-century global economy, we've launched a competitive Race to the Top fund through the Recovery Act to reform our schools and raise achievement, especially in math and science. And we've made college more affordable, proposed a historic set of reforms and investments in community college, and set a goal of once again leading the world in producing college graduates by the year 2020.

Because even the best trained worker in the world can't compete if our businesses are saddled with rapidly increasing health care costs. We are fighting to do what we have discussed in this country for generations: finally reforming our Nation's broken health insurance system and relieving this unsustainable burden.

Because our economic future depends on a financial system that encourages sound investments, honest dealings, and long-term growth, we've proposed the most ambitious financial reforms since the Great Depression. We'll set and enforce clear rules of the road, close loopholes in oversight, charge a new agency with protecting consumers, and address the dangerous, systemic risks that brought us to the brink of disaster. These reforms are moving through Congress, we're working to keep these reforms strong, and I'm looking forward to signing them into law.

And because our economic future depends on our leadership in the industries of the future, we are investing in basic applied research and working to create the incentives to build a new clean energy economy. For we know the nation that leads in clean energy will be the nation that leads the world. I want America to be that nation. I want America's prosperity to be powered by what we invent and pioneer, not just what we borrow and what we consume. And I know that we can and will be that nation if we are willing to do what it takes to get there.

Now, there are those who claim we have to choose between paying down our deficits on the one hand and investing in job creation and economic growth on the other. This is a false

choice. Ensuring that economic growth and job creation are strong and sustained is critical to ensuring that we are increasing revenues and decreasing spending on things like unemployment insurance so that our deficits will start coming down. At the same time, instilling confidence in our commitment to being fiscally prudent gives the private sector the confidence to make long-term investments in our people and in America.

So one of the central goals of this administration is restoring fiscal responsibility. Even as we have had to spend our way out of this recession in the near term, we've begun to make the hard choices necessary to get our country on a more stable fiscal footing in the long run. So let me just be clear here: Despite what some have claimed, the cost of the Recovery Act is only a very small part of our current budget imbalance. In reality, the deficit had been building dramatically over the previous 8 years. We have a structural gap between the money going out and the money coming in.

Folks passed tax cuts and expansive entitlement programs without paying for any of it, even as health care costs kept rising, year after year. As a result, the deficit had reached $1.3 trillion when we walked into the White House. And I'd note, these budget-busting tax cuts and spending programs were approved by many of the same people who are now waxing political about fiscal responsibility, while opposing our efforts to reduce deficits by getting health care costs under control. It's a sight to see.

The fact is, we have refused to go along with business as usual; we are taking responsibility for every dollar we spend. We've done what some said was impossible: preventing wasteful spending on outdated weapons systems that even the Pentagon said it didn't want. We've combed the budget, cutting waste and excess wherever we could. I'm still committed to halving the deficit we inherited by the end of my first term—cutting it in half. And I made clear from day one that I would not sign a health insurance reform bill if it raised the deficit by one dime, and neither the House, nor the Senate bill does. We've begun not only changing policies in Washington, we've also begun to change the culture in Washington.

In the end, the economic crisis of the past year was not just the result of weaknesses in our economy. It was also the result of weaknesses in our political system, because for decades, too many in Washington put off the hard decisions. For decades, we've watched as efforts to solve tough problems have fallen prey to the bitterness of partisanship, to prosaic concerns of politics, to ever-quickening news cycles, to endless campaigns focused on scoring points instead of meeting our common challenges.

We've seen the consequences of this failure of responsibility. The American people have paid a heavy price. And the question we'll have to answer now is if we're going to learn from our past, or if, even in the aftermath of disaster, we're going to repeat those same mistakes. As the alarm bells fade, the din of Washington rises, as the forces of the status quo marshal their resources, we can be sure that answering this question will be a fight to the finish. But I have every hope and expectation that we can rise to this moment, that we can transcend the failures of the past, that we can once again take responsibility for our future.

Now, every night I read letters and e-mails sent to me from people across America, ordinary folks, people who share their hopes and their hardships, their faith in this country, their frustration with what's happened in this economy. I hear from small-business owners worried about making payroll and keeping their doors open. I hear from mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, who've seen one or two or more family members out of work. The toughest letters are in children's handwriting. Kids write to me: "My dad just lost a job." "My grandma's sick. She can't afford health insurance." Kids who can't just be kids because they're worried about moms having their hours cut, or dad losing a job, or a family without health insurance.

Now, these folks aren't looking for a handout, they're not looking for a bailout—just like those people I visited in Allentown—all they're looking for is a chance to make their own way, to work, to succeed using their

talents and skills. And they're looking for folks in Washington to have a seriousness of purpose that matches the reality of their struggle.

Everywhere I've gone, every stop I've made, there are people like this, men and women who have faced misfortune, but who stand ready to build a better future: students ready to learn, workers eager to work, scientists on the brink of discovery, entrepreneurs seeking the chance to open a small business. Everywhere I go, there are once-shuttered factories just waiting to whir back to life in burgeoning industries. There is a nation ready to meet the challenges of this new age and to lead the world in this new century. And as we look back on the progress of the past year and look forward to the work ahead, I have every confidence that we will do exactly that.

These have been a tough 2 years. And there will no doubt be difficult months ahead. But the storms of the past are receding. The skies are brightening. And the horizon is beckoning once more.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:23 a.m. at the Brookings Institution. In his remarks, he referred to Strobe Talbott, president, Brookings Institution, who introduced the President.

Statement on the Settlement of the *Cobell* Class-Action Lawsuit on Indian Trust Management
December 8, 2009

Today Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and Attorney General Eric Holder announced that, at long last, a settlement has been reached in the Cobell class-action lawsuit. This suit was originally filed in 1996 over the United States Government's trust management and accounting of hundreds of thousands of individual American Indian trust accounts. With this announcement, we take an important step towards a sincere reconciliation between the trust beneficiaries and the Federal Government and lay the foundation for more effective management of Indian trust assets in the future. I want to applaud Secretary Salazar and Attorney General Holder for working tirelessly with the plaintiffs to help reach this settlement.

As a candidate, I heard from many in Indian Country that the *Cobell* suit remained a stain on the nation-to-nation relationship I value so much. I pledged my commitment to resolving this issue, and I am proud that my administration has taken this step today. I came to Washington with a promise to change how our Government deals with difficult issues like this and a promise that the facts and policies, and not politics, will guide our actions and decisions.

But it is important to note that today's actions are not the final step. The District Court for the District of Columbia must formally endorse the settlement, and Congress must enact legislation to authorize implementation. I urge Congress to act swiftly to correct this longstanding injustice and to remember that no special appropriations are required. I congratulate all those in Indian Country that have waited for this news and join them in waiting for a quick conclusion to the process.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Congressional Leaders
December 9, 2009

Hello, everybody. Sorry I'm a little late. I have just concluded an informative and constructive discussion with Republican and Democratic leaders about job creation and our economic future. We spoke about the challenges facing our families, our businesses, and our country as a whole, and what we can do to overcome them. Today's meeting built on some of the ideas that I offered in the economic speech that I gave yesterday and on some of the ideas discussed at the job forum that we held at the White House last week.

Now, looking at the situation we face today, what's clear is, is that our economy is in a very

different place than it was when I took office last year. Our economy at that time was on the brink of collapse. The credit and the housing markets were in deep trouble, and we were losing 700,000 jobs a month. And economists of every stripe were concerned that we might be slipping into a second depression.

That's not what happened. Because of the Recovery Act and a number of other measures, and because of distasteful but necessary steps to help our auto industry recover and stabilize our banks, we've pulled our economy back from the abyss. And while there's a lot of work left to do, our economy is now growing for the first time in over a year, and we just received the best jobs report in over 2 years.

Of course, it's a sign of how tough times are that the best job report in 2 years still shows a loss of 11,000 jobs. And I'm not going to rest until every American who's looking for work can find a job, until we put America back to work.

And it's no secret that there's been less than full bipartisan support for the Recovery Act and some of the steps that have broken the freefall of our economy. But my hope is that as we move forward, we can do so together, recognizing that we have a shared responsibility to meet our economic challenges on behalf of all Americans, those who elected us to make sure that we're doing the people's business.

Small businesses, for example, are the engines that drive much of the hiring in our economy. So we should be able to forge a consensus around a series of steps to help small businesses grow and hire new employees. These steps include elimination of the capital gains taxes on small-business investment along with an extension of writeoffs to encourage expansion in the coming year. And I've urged congressional leaders to create a tax incentive to create—to encourage small businesses to add and keep workers.

I've proposed making an additional investment in the Nation's infrastructure, beyond what was included in the Recovery Act, to continue modernizing our transportation and communications networks. We've already begun to do so. In the first 6 months of 2010, Recovery Act outlays on projects related to infrastructure will actually double what was done over the previous 6 months. This is not only going to put more Americans back to work, but this is also work that America needs done and will help fortify our economy for years to come.

I've called on Congress to provide temporary incentives for consumers to buy the materials needed to retrofit their homes for greater energy efficiency. This program will spur hiring and spending, promote energy conservation, and help Americans put more money in their pockets by saving on their energy bills. I've also proposed that we extend proven initiatives that promote energy efficiency and clean energy jobs. And to help Americans weather this economic storm, I've called for an extension of emergency relief to States, seniors, and citizens who need it most.

Finally, to support these efforts, we're going to wind down the Troubled Asset Relief Program, what's known as TARP, the emergency fund created to stabilize the banking system. This program has served its original purpose, and the cost has been much lower than we expected, giving us a chance to pay down the deficit faster than we thought at the time and also allowing us to invest in job creation on Main Street rather than on Wall Street. Now, more will need to be done to put our Nation on a firm fiscal footing, and I'm looking forward to working with the group of leaders that I just met today about how we can structure a plausible scenario to get to medium- and long-term deficit reduction.

Now, it's appropriate that I met with leaders of both parties. Spurring hiring and economic growth are not Democratic or Republican issues; they are American issues that affect every single one of our constituents. Now, I am absolutely committed to working with anybody who is willing to do the job to make sure that we can rebuild our economy and make sure that Americans all across the country, regardless of political persuasion, are seeing the kinds of opportunities that we expect here in the United States of America.

I'm confident we can do so. I'm confident we can put our economic troubles behind us. But it's going to require some work and

cooperation and a seriousness of purpose here in Washington. And I hope that as we enter into the holiday season, the leaders that I just met with will feel the same way.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:26 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Remarks on Community Health Centers
December 9, 2009

The President. Thank you, guys. Please, have a seat. Good afternoon, everybody.

Audience members. Good afternoon.

The President. I am pleased that you could all join us today as we announce three new initiatives to help our community health centers provide better care to people in need all across America.

I want to thank our Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, our Surgeon General, Dr. Regina Benjamin, our Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration, Dr. Mary Wakefield, and our Deputy Secretary of HHS, Bill Corr, for being here today and for their outstanding work to support community health centers. There they are. By the way, Regina, it's good to see you in your uniform. [*Laughter*] We had been waiting for that.

I also want to thank the many Members of Congress who are with us today both in the audience and up on the stage, particularly Bernie Sanders and Representative Jim Clyburn. We are grateful for all that you've done.

And I especially want to recognize the leaders here today from health centers across the country for what all of you are doing in your communities every day, working long hours to provide quality care at prices that people can afford, with the dignity and respect they deserve, and in a way that takes into account the challenges that they face in their lives.

For you folks, health care isn't just about diagnosing patients and treating illness, it's about caring for people and promoting wellness. It's about emphasizing education and prevention and helping people lead healthier lives so they don't get sick in the first place.

And it works. Studies show that people living near a health center are less likely to go to the emergency room and less likely to have unmet critical medical needs. CHCs are proven to reduce ethnic and racial disparities in care. And the medical expenses of regular CHC patients are nearly 25 percent lower than those folks who get their care elsewhere—25 percent lower.

So you can see why, in a speech marking the first anniversary of the first community health centers in America, Senator Ted Kennedy declared: "You have not only assured the best in health care for your families and neighbors, but you've also begun a minor revolution in American medicine."

Now, unfortunately, today, nearly 45 years later, that care has yet to reach many of the folks in this country who need it most. Today, millions of Americans still have difficulty accessing primary health care, and many of them are uninsured. Many have insurance, but live in underserved areas, whether in urban or rural communities. So they don't get regular checkups, they don't get regular—routine screenings. When they get sick or hurt, they tough it out and hope for the best, and when things get bad enough, they head to the emergency room.

So we end up treating complications, crises, and chronic conditions that could have been prevented in the first place. And the cost is measured not just in dollars spent on health care, or in lost workplace absences and lower productivity, but in the kind of raw human suffering that has no place in the United States of America in the year 2009.

No matter what party we belong to or where on the political spectrum we fall, none of us thinks this is acceptable. None of us would defend this system. And that's why we've taken up the cause of health insurance reform this year. It's why many of the folks in this room fought so hard to ensure that the Recovery Act included unprecedented investments, a total of $2

billion, to upgrade and expand our health centers, investments that embody the act's core mission: to help folks hardest hit by this recession, to put people back to work, and to leave a legacy of improvements that will continue to lift up communities for generations to come.

Today, we're well on our way to meeting these goals. We've created or saved up to 1.6 million jobs, according to the CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, through the Recovery Act. Our economy is growing again. We're doubling our capacity in renewable energy and rebuilding schools and laboratories, railways, and highways. Yesterday the Kaiser Family Foundation issued a new report showing the Recovery Act has helped many States keep and improve access to health insurance for families in need.

And so far, we've allocated nearly $1.4 billion to health centers across America so they can get to work building and renovating and hiring new staff this year. And today I'm pleased to announce that we're awarding more than $500 million to 85 centers in more than 30 States and Puerto Rico that are providing critical care for so many folks with nowhere else to turn.

We're investing in places like Canyonlands Community Health Care in Arizona, that has one facility operating in a building originally constructed as a chicken coop and another in a cramped fire station. We're investing in places like Avis Goodwin Community Health Center in Dover, New Hampshire—[*applause*]—that's become so overcrowded—you must be from there. [*Laughter*] It's become so overcrowded the doctors are using bathrooms and closets as offices. We're investing in Bucksport Regional Health Center in Maine, where doctors are double-booked and the waiting rooms are often standing room only. We're giving places like these the funding they need to upgrade and expand their facilities so they can meet the sky-rocketing demand for services that's come with this economic downturn.

But we won't just want our health centers to provide more care for more patients; we want them to provide better care as well. So starting today, we're making $88 million in funding available for centers to adopt new health information technology systems to manage their administrative and financial matters and transfer old paper files to electronic medical records. These investments won't just increase efficiency and lower costs, they'll improve the quality of care as well, preventing countless medical errors and allowing providers to spend less time with paperwork and more time with patients.

That's the purpose of the final initiative I'm announcing today as well, a demonstration project to evaluate the benefits of the medical home model of care that many of our health centers aspire to. The idea here is very simple, that in order for care to be effective, it needs to be coordinated. It's a model where the center that serves as your medical home might help you keep track of your prescriptions, or get the referrals you need, or work with you to develop a plan of care that ensures your providers are working together to keep you healthy.

So taken together, these three initiatives—funding for construction, technology, and a medical home demonstration—they won't just save money over the long term and create more jobs, they're also going to give more people the peace of mind of knowing that health care will be there for them and their families when they need it. And ultimately, that's what health insurance reform is really about. That's what the Members of Congress here today will be voting on in the coming weeks.

Now, let me just end by saying a little bit about this broader effort. I know it's been a long road. [*Laughter*] I know it's been a tough fight. But I also know the reason we've taken up this cause is the very same reason why so many members from both parties are here today, because no matter what our politics are, we know that when it comes to health care, the people we serve deserve better.

The legislation in Congress today contains both Democratic ideas and Republican ideas and plenty of compromises in between. The Senate made critical progress last night with a creative new framework that I believe will help pave the way for final passage and a historic achievement on behalf of the American

people. I support this effort, especially since it's aimed at increasing choice and competition and lowering cost. So I want to thank all of you for sticking with it, for all those late nights, all the long weekends that you guys have put in. With so much at stake, this is well worth all of our efforts.

It is now my pleasure to sign the memo that will direct Secretary Sebelius to get started on that medical home demonstration. So let's do that.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:39 p.m. in the South Court Auditorium of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

Exchange With Reporters in Oslo, Norway
December 10, 2009

Signing Norwegian Nobel Institute Guest Book

Q. What did you write, Mr. President?

The President. I wrote, "Thank you." No, what I did write, actually, is worth mentioning. In addition to being honored to receive it, I think it's important to congratulate the Nobel Committee for the work that it's done over the course of history to highlight the cause of peace, but also to give voice to the voiceless and the oppressed around the world.

When you look at the wall, Michelle and I were commenting on the fact that when Dr. King won his prize it had a galvanizing effect around the world, but also lifted his stature in the United States in a way that allowed him to be more effective. And that's a legacy of the Nobel Committee that we're very grateful for.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:46 a.m. at the Norwegian Nobel Institute. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg of Norway and an Exchange With Reporters in Oslo
December 10, 2009

Prime Minister Stoltenberg. Mr. President, it is a great pleasure and honor to welcome you here in Oslo. And once again, I would like to congratulate you on being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 2009. You have really created a new climate of international cooperation through your very strong emphasis on the need for dialogue. And I, personally, very much appreciate this opportunity to continue our dialogue from the NATO summit in Strasbourg and from the U.N. this fall.

Norway and the United States are close allies. We are partners in NATO, and we enjoy close, longstanding relationships. We cooperate in the high north, and we work closely on a number of different global issues. Today we have discussed the most pressing challenge of our time, climate change. We need a strong political agreement in Copenhagen, and I briefed the President on the Norwegian-Mexican initiative on financing, which is a key issue in Copenhagen.

Developed countries must provide more funding for climate action in the developing world. We need money both for the short term and the long term, and we need funding both from the public and from the private sector. The cap and trade system championed by your administration, Mr. President, is truly in keeping with our approach here in Norway. By capping emissions, we reduce emissions and we put a price on carbon, which is very, very important. This will bring strong incentives to develop new and cleaner technologies.

We have agreed that Norway and the U.S. will work together to ensure that efforts to reduce emissions from tropical forests will be an important element in a deal in Copenhagen. U.S. leadership is crucial if you are to succeed

in combating climate change. Mr. President, you are providing that leadership.

We discussed Afghanistan. I welcome the stronger and broader U.S. involvement aimed at ensuring development and stability. Norway is committed to continuing our military and civilian efforts in Afghanistan. And I am pleased to announce that Norway will increase its financial contribution to the Afghan National Army and police to a total of 110 million U.S. dollars for the period 2010 to 2014. We must enable Afghans to take responsibility for their own security.

We touched upon the situation in the Middle East. As chair of the international donors group, I expressed my support for the U.S. efforts to bring the peace process between the Israelis and the Palestinians back on track.

And we have agreed to work together for U.N. Millennium Development summit in New York next autumn.

We recognize our collective effort on global health issues, including maternal and child health and strengthening of health systems. We need to scale up efforts to ensure the health and safety of every woman and child in connection with childbirth.

We are ready to work together with you, Mr. President, to meet these and other challenges. Mr. President, we are delighted to have you in Oslo. The floor is yours.

President Obama. Thank you so much. Well, it is a great honor to be here in Norway. I appreciate the extraordinary hospitality of the Norwegian people, and I thank Prime Minister Stoltenberg for his friendship and his extraordinary leadership here in his country. I only wish that my family could stay longer in this wonderful country, but I still have a lot of work to do back in Washington, DC, before the year is done.

Norway is a close friend and an ally, and the relationship between the American and the Norwegian people has always been extraordinarily strong. It's been noted that there are probably more Norwegians, or at least persons of Norwegian descent, in the United States than there are here in Norway. Norwegians were among the earliest settlers on our shores, and many Norwegian Americans rank as distinguished American citizens. I should also note that, as I was driving through—this being my first visit to Norway—I understood why they all moved to Wisconsin and Minnesota, some of our northern States, because they look identical to Norway.

Today, our relationship thrives on the basis of our common values and our shared aspirations for a better world. To that end, our cooperation spans a broad range of issues, as the Prime Minister indicated, including building stability and security in Afghanistan and the Balkans, confronting nuclear proliferation and climate change, advancing human rights, and global health.

Something that, obviously, is pressing right now is the issue of climate change, and the Prime Minister and I discussed the ongoing meeting in Copenhagen, in which we're both strongly committed to a positive outcome. The United States has done a lot of work this year to transform the way we think about energy and our use back home and to help to move international climate negotiations forward in an effective way. And I look forward to coming back this way next week during the leaders' summit that ends the conference.

Prime Minister Stoltenberg and I also discussed how we can work together and with other countries to protect forests, something that he has personally championed. And I'm very impressed with the model that has been built between Norway and Brazil that allows for effective monitoring and ensures that we are making progress in avoiding deforestation of the Amazon. And we all understand that it's probably the most cost-effective way for us to address the issue of climate change, having an effective set of mechanisms in place to avoid further deforestation and, hopefully, to plant new trees.

The Prime Minister and I also reaffirmed our mutual commitment to improving global health. We committed to work together to deal with maternal child and newborn health, to promote research and innovation and strengthen health systems.

I discussed our strategy in Afghanistan, and I want to add that we are grateful to the people of Norway and the sacrifices that they've

made on behalf of this effort. Norway has consistently stood alongside the United States and, as is true in so many other areas of international relations, I indicated to the Prime Minister an expression that we use in America—it's a boxing term—Norway punches above its weight. It is a very effective actor internationally, and it has been here on the issue of Afghanistan. And I appreciate the Prime Minister's announcement of the total of $110 million for the Afghan security force trust fund. It will be absolutely critical for us to build capacity, and that's something that is at the core of the effort that we're embarking in over the next several years.

Finally, I want to thank His Majesty King Harald V and the Royal Family for the extraordinary hospitality that they are showing Michelle and myself. We look forward to the extraordinary honor of the events associated with the Nobel Peace Prize. I want to thank the people of Norway.

And with that, perhaps we can take some questions.

Nobel Peace Prize/The Presidency

Q. Good morning.

President Obama. Hi, how are you?

Q. Giving the peace prize to you, Mr. President, has been described as premature. How can you use the prize, do you think, to make some of your good intentions materialize and then counter that criticism?

President Obama. Well, you know, first of all, as I said upon receiving the news of the prize, it was a great surprise to me. I have no doubt that there are others who may be more deserving. My task here is to continue on the path that, I believe, is not only important for America, but important for lasting peace and security in the world. That means pursuing a world free of nuclear weapons over time and strengthening our mechanisms to avoid nuclear proliferation. That means addressing climate change in an effective way. It means stabilizing countries like Afghanistan and mobilizing an international effort to deal with terrorism that is consistent with our values and our ideals. It means addressing issues of development, because we understand the connection between economic justice and peace.

So on a whole host of initiatives that I've put forward this year, some of which are beginning to bear fruit, the goal is not to win a popularity contest or to get an award, even one as esteemed as the Nobel Peace Prize. The goal has been to advance America's interests, to strengthen our economy at home, and to make ourselves a continuing force for good in the world, something that we've been for decades now.

And if I'm successful in those tasks, then hopefully, some of the criticism will subside, but that's not really my concern. And if I'm not successful, then all the praise and the awards in the world won't disguise that fact.

Okay, I think we've only got time for two, and I've got to make sure that one of our poor Americans who traveled here and are very exhausted at this point because they didn't get enough sleep—is Ben [Ben Feller, Associated Press] around? There you are, Ben. I guess you're not the only one tired. [*Laughter*] I missed you.

Arrest of U.S. Citizens in Pakistan/Muslim Americans/Military Operations in Afghanistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to ask you about national security. There's been a lot of debate about the July 2011 deadline; that date in your Afghanistan speech. Can you assure the American public that that is when American forces will begin to come home, or is it possible that that date could slip? And also, I'd like to get your reaction to the arrests of five American—young American Muslims in Pakistan on charges of terrorism?

And to the Prime Minister, if I could, I'd like to get your reaction to my colleague's question about the debate over the President's Nobel Peace Prize. What is your reaction to this concern that it may be premature?

President Obama. First of all, with respect to the five young men who were arrested in Pakistan, I think the details are still forthcoming. There will undoubtedly be a series of investigations surrounding these events, so I'd prefer not to comment on them at this point.

I think what has been remarkable over the course of the last 8, 9 years since 9/11 is the degree to which America has reaffirmed the

extraordinary contributions of the Muslim American community and how they have been woven into the fabric of our Nation in a seamless fashion. On the other hand, the degree to which the fierce loyalty towards America, the fierce patriotism and integration of Muslim Americans into America life have helped to avoid some of the problems that we've seen in other countries on this issue.

Now, the Muslim American community is vast, so we have to constantly be mindful that some of these twisted ideologies are available over the Internet and can affect our young people. But I think we've got a good story to tell here and one that we need to build on.

With respect to Afghanistan, I think General McChrystal said it as well as it could have been said in his testimony. We believe we've got the right strategy. We believe we can execute the strategy, that we can build Afghan capacity, protect population centers, and blunt and degrade the Taliban capacity so that beginning on July of 2011, we are beginning to transfer responsibility to the Afghan people and Afghan security forces.

I've been unambiguous about this, so there should not be a debate. Starting in July 2011, we will begin that transition, that transfer of responsibility. The pace at which that takes place, the slope of a drawdown, how it occurs tactically, those are all going to be conditions based. And so, just as in Iraq, there was a constant monitoring of the situation and continues to be, and there's discussion on an ongoing basis between myself and General Odierno and our national security team, so will those kind of conversations be taking place in Afghanistan.

And as I indicated to the Prime Minister, I think it's very important to understand that we're not going to see some sharp cliff, some precipitous drawdown. Our whole concept here is to train and partner with Afghan forces and to transfer to them even as our troops are fighting alongside each other. It's also important to understand that several years after U.S. combat troops have been drastically reduced in the region, and ISAF troops have been reduced in the region, the Afghan Government is still going to need support for those security forces. We are still going to have an interest in partnering with Afghans and Pakistanis and others in dealing with the remnants of terrorist activity there.

So that's not going to go away. Our commitment to Afghan development, to their civilians, to increasing their agricultural production, all those things are going to continue. But July 2011 will signal a shift in our mission.

Prime Minister Stoltenberg. Let me just say some words about your question. First of all, I would like say that, in my opinion, the Nobel Peace Prize to President Barack Obama is a very well deserved and important award, because the whole idea with the Nobel Peace Prize, as it is expressed in the last will of Alfred Nobel, is that it shall contribute to peace based on an assessment on what a person has done the last year. And I cannot think about anybody else who has done more for peace during the last year than Barack Obama, because he has become President and he has taken initiatives when it comes to disarmament, when it comes to nonproliferation, when it comes to a world without nuclear weapons, and also when it comes to important issues regarding preventing conflicts. For instance, fighting global warming, taking leadership as he has done when it comes to trying to reach an agreement in Copenhagen, is an important part of creating a world with less conflicts, more peace, and less ground for war and conflicts.

And the whole new agenda the President has created when it comes to the importance of international cooperation, dialogue, and the importance that we are solving common problems together, is a strong and bold initiative which is promoting peace.

So it is a well deserved peace prize, and hopefully, it is really in the best spirit of Alfred Nobel, because it can contribute in itself to strengthening the efforts of the President to work for peace. So I support the Nobel Committee. It is an independent committee, but I support the decision; I think it's a very bold and an important decision.

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:05 a.m. in the Prime Minister's office. In his remarks, he referred to Ahmad Abdulminni, Umar Farooq, Waqir Hussain Khan, Aman Hasan Yamer, and Ramys Zamzam, who were arrested on December 7 in Sargodha, Pakistan, for suspected terrorist activity; Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan; and Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq. Audio was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks on Accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo
December 10, 2009

Your Majesties, Your Royal Highnesses, distinguished members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, citizens of America, and citizens of the world: I receive this honor with deep gratitude and great humility. It's an award that speaks to our highest aspirations, that for all the cruelty and hardship of our world, we are not mere prisoners of fate; our actions matter and can bend history in the direction of justice.

And yet I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the considerable controversy that your generous decision has generated. [*Laughter*] In part, this is because I am at the beginning and not the end of my labors on the world stage. Compared to some of the giants of history who've received this prize—Schweitzer and King, Marshall and Mandela—my accomplishments are slight. And then there are the men and women around the world who have been jailed and beaten in the pursuit of justice, those who toil in humanitarian organizations to relieve suffering, the unrecognized millions whose quiet acts of courage and compassion inspire even the most hardened cynics. I cannot argue with those who find these men and women, some known, some obscure to all but those they help, to be far more deserving of this honor than I.

But perhaps the most profound issue surrounding my receipt of this prize is the fact that I am the Commander in Chief of the military of a nation in the midst of two wars. One of these wars is winding down. The other is a conflict that America did not seek, one in which we are joined by 42 other countries, including Norway, in an effort to defend ourselves and all nations from further attacks.

Still, we are at war, and I'm responsible for the deployment of thousands of young Americans to battle in a distant land, and some will kill, and some will be killed. And so I come here with an acute sense of the costs of armed conflict, filled with difficult questions about the relationship between war and peace and our effort to replace one with the other.

Now, these questions are not new. War, in one form or another, appeared with the first man. At the dawn of history, its morality was not questioned; it was simply a fact, like drought or disease, the manner in which tribes and then civilizations sought power and settled their differences.

And over time, as codes of law sought to control violence within groups, so did philosophers and clerics and statesmen seek to regulate the destructive power of war. The concept of a just war emerged, suggesting that war is justified only when certain conditions were met: if it is waged as a last resort or in self-defense; if the force used is proportional; and if, whenever possible, civilians are spared from violence.

Of course, we know that for most of history, this concept of just war was rarely observed. The capacity of human beings to think of new ways to kill one another proved inexhaustible, as did our capacity to exempt from mercy those who look different or pray to a different God. Wars between armies gave way to wars between nations, total wars, in which the distinction between combatant and civilian became blurred. In the span of 30 years, such carnage would twice engulf this continent. And while it's hard to conceive of a cause more just than the defeat of the Third Reich and the Axis powers, World War II was a conflict in which the total number of civilians who died exceeded the number of soldiers who perished.

In the wake of such destruction and with the advent of the nuclear age, it became clear to victor and vanquished alike that the world needed institutions to prevent another world war. And so a quarter century after the United States Senate rejected the League of Nations—an idea for which Woodrow Wilson received this prize—America led the world in constructing an architecture to keep the peace: a Marshall plan and a United Nations, mechanisms to govern the waging of war, treaties to protect human rights, prevent genocide, restrict the most dangerous weapons.

In many ways, these efforts succeeded. Yes, terrible wars have been fought and atrocities committed. But there has been no third world war. The cold war ended with jubilant crowds dismantling a wall. Commerce has stitched much of the world together. Billions have been lifted from poverty. The ideals of liberty and self-determination, equality and the rule of law have haltingly advanced. We are the heirs of the fortitude and foresight of generations past, and it is a legacy for which my own country is rightfully proud.

And yet, a decade into a new century, this old architecture is buckling under the weight of new threats. The world may no longer shudder at the prospect of war between two nuclear superpowers, but proliferation may increase the risk of catastrophe. Terrorism has long been a tactic, but modern technology allows a few small men with outsized rage to murder innocents on a horrific scale.

Moreover, wars between nations have increasingly given way to wars within nations. The resurgence of ethnic or sectarian conflicts, the growth of secessionist movements, insurgencies, and failed states, all these things have increasingly trapped civilians in unending chaos. In today's wars, many more civilians are killed than soldiers, the seeds of future conflict are sown, economies are wrecked, civil societies torn asunder, refugees amassed, children scarred.

I do not bring with me today a definitive solution to the problems of war. What I do know is that meeting these challenges will require the same vision, hard work, and persistence of those men and women who acted so boldly decades ago. And it will require us to think in new ways about the notions of just war and the imperatives of a just peace.

We must begin by acknowledging a hard truth: We will not eradicate violent conflict in our lifetimes. There will be times when nations, acting individually or in concert, will find the use of force not only necessary but morally justified.

I make this statement mindful of what Martin Luther King, Jr., said in this same ceremony years ago: "Violence never brings permanent peace. It solves no social problem: it merely creates new and more complicated ones." As someone who stands here as a direct consequence of Dr. King's life work, I am living testimony to the moral force of nonviolence. I know there's nothing weak, nothing passive, nothing naive in the creed and lives of Gandhi and King.

But as a head of state sworn to protect and defend my nation, I cannot be guided by their examples alone. I face the world as it is and cannot stand idle in the face of threats to the American people. For make no mistake: Evil does exist in the world. A nonviolent movement could not have halted Hitler's armies. Negotiations cannot convince Al Qaida's leaders to lay down their arms. To say that force may sometimes be necessary is not a call to cynicism; it is a recognition of history, the imperfections of man, and the limits of reason.

I raise this point—I begin with this point because in many countries, there is a deep ambivalence about military action today, no matter what the cause. And at times, this is joined by a reflexive suspicion of America, the world's sole military superpower.

Yet the world must remember that it was not simply international institutions, not just treaties and declarations that brought stability to a post-World War II world. Whatever mistakes we have made, the plain fact is this: The United States of America has helped underwrite global security for more than six decades with the blood of our citizens and the strength of our arms. The service and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform has promoted peace and prosperity from Germany to Korea and enabled democracy to take hold in places

like the Balkans. We have borne this burden not because we seek to impose our will. We have done so out of enlightened self-interest, because we seek a better future for our children and grandchildren, and we believe that their lives will be better if others' children and grandchildren can live in freedom and prosperity.

So yes, the instruments of war do have a role to play in preserving the peace. And yet this truth must coexist with another: That no matter how justified, war promises human tragedy. The soldier's courage and sacrifice is full of glory, expressing devotion to country, to cause, to comrades in arms. But war itself is never glorious, and we must never trumpet it as such.

So part of our challenge is reconciling these two seemingly irreconcilable truths: That war is sometimes necessary, and war at some level is an expression of human folly. Concretely, we must direct our effort to the task that President Kennedy called for long ago. "Let us focus," he said, "on a more practical, more attainable peace, based not on a sudden revolution in human nature but on a gradual evolution in human institutions"—a gradual evolution of human institutions. What might this evolution look like? What might these practical steps be?

To begin with, I believe that all nations, strong and weak alike, must adhere to standards that govern the use of force. I, like any head of state, reserve the right to act unilaterally if necessary to defend my nation. Nevertheless, I am convinced that adhering to standards—international standards strengthens those who do and isolates and weakens those who don't.

The world rallied around America after the 9/11 attacks and continues to support our efforts in Afghanistan because of the horror of those senseless attacks and the recognized principle of self-defense. Likewise, the world recognized the need to confront Saddam Hussein when he invaded Kuwait, a consensus that sent a clear message to all about the cost of aggression.

Furthermore, America—in fact, no nation—can insist that others follow the rules of the road if we refuse to follow them ourselves. For when we don't, our actions appear arbitrary and undercut the legitimacy of future interventions, no matter how justified.

And this becomes particularly important when the purpose of military action extends beyond self-defense or the defense of one nation against an aggressor. More and more, we all confront difficult questions about how to prevent the slaughter of civilians by their own government or to stop a civil war whose violence and suffering can engulf an entire region.

I believe that force can be justified on humanitarian grounds, as it was in the Balkans or in other places that have been scarred by war. Inaction tears at our conscience and can lead to more costly intervention later. That's why all responsible nations must embrace the role that militaries with a clear mandate can play to keep the peace.

America's commitment to global security will never waver. But in a world in which threats are more diffuse and missions more complex, America cannot act alone. America alone cannot secure the peace. This is true in Afghanistan. This is true in failed states like Somalia, where terrorism and piracy is joined by famine and human suffering. And sadly, it will continue to be true in unstable regions for years to come.

The leaders and soldiers of NATO countries and other friends and allies demonstrate this truth through the capacity and courage they've shown in Afghanistan. But in many countries, there is a disconnect between the efforts of those who serve and the ambivalence of the broader public. I understand why war is not popular, but I also know this: The belief that peace is desirable is rarely enough to achieve it. Peace requires responsibility; peace entails sacrifice. That's why NATO continues to be indispensable. That's why we must strengthen U.N. and regional peacekeeping and not leave the task to a few countries. That's why we honor those who return home from peacekeeping and training abroad to Oslo and Rome, to Ottawa and Sydney, to Dhaka and Kigali. We honor them not as makers of war, but of wagers—but as wagers of peace.

Let me make one final point about the use of force. Even as we make difficult decisions about going to war, we must also think clearly about how we fight it. The Nobel Committee recognized this truth in awarding its first prize for peace to Henry Dunant, the founder of the Red

Cross and a driving force behind the Geneva Conventions.

Where force is necessary, we have a moral and strategic interest in binding ourselves to certain rules of conduct. And even as we confront a vicious adversary that abides by no rules, I believe the United States of America must remain a standard bearer in the conduct of war. That is what makes us different from those whom we fight. That is a source of our strength. That is why I prohibited torture. That is why I ordered the prison at Guantanamo Bay closed. And that is why I have reaffirmed America's commitment to abide by the Geneva Conventions. We lose ourselves when we compromise the very ideals that we fight to defend, and we honor those ideals by upholding them not when it's easy, but when it is hard.

I have spoken at some length to the question that must weigh on our minds and our hearts as we choose to wage war. But let me now turn to our effort to avoid such tragic choices and speak of three ways that we can build a just and lasting peace.

First, in dealing with those nations that break rules and laws, I believe that we must develop alternatives to violence that are tough enough to actually change behavior. For if we want a lasting peace, then the words of the international community must mean something. Those regimes that break the rules must be held accountable. Sanctions must exact a real price. Intransigence must be met with increased pressure, and such pressure exists only when the world stands together as one.

One urgent example is the effort to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and to seek a world without them. In the middle of the last century, nations agreed to be bound by a treaty whose bargain is clear: All will have access to peaceful nuclear power; those without nuclear weapons will forsake them; and those with nuclear weapons will work towards disarmament. I am committed to upholding this treaty. It is a centerpiece of my foreign policy. And I'm working with President Medvedev to reduce America and Russia's nuclear stockpiles.

But it's also incumbent upon all of us to insist that nations like Iran and North Korea do not game the system. Those who claim to respect international law cannot avert their eyes when those laws are flouted. Those who care for their own security cannot ignore the danger of an arms race in the Middle East or East Asia. Those who seek peace cannot stand idly by as nations arm themselves for nuclear war.

The same principle applies to those who violate international laws by brutalizing their own people. When there is genocide in Darfur, systematic rape in Congo, repression in Burma, there must be consequences. Yes, there will be engagement; yes, there will be diplomacy. But there must be consequences when those things fail. And the closer we stand together, the less likely we will be faced with the choice between armed intervention and complicity in oppression.

This brings me to a second point: the nature of the peace that we seek. For peace is not merely the absence of visible conflict. Only a just peace based on the inherent rights and dignity of every individual can truly be lasting.

It was this insight that drove drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights after the Second World War. In the wake of devastation, they recognized that if human rights are not protected, peace is a hollow promise.

And yet too often these words are ignored. For some countries, the failure to uphold human rights is excused by the false suggestion that these are somehow Western principles, foreign to local cultures or stages of a nation's development. And within America, there's long been a tension between those who describe themselves as realists or idealists, a tension that suggests a stark choice between the narrow pursuit of interests or an endless campaign to impose our values around the world.

I reject these choices. I believe that peace is unstable where citizens are denied the right to speak freely or worship as they please, choose their own leaders or assemble without fear. Pent-up grievances fester, and the suppression of tribal and religious identity can lead to violence. We also know that the opposite is true. Only when Europe became free did it finally find peace. America has never fought a war

against a democracy, and our closest friends are governments that protect the rights of their citizens. No matter how callously defined, neither America's interests nor the world's are served by the denial of human aspirations.

So even as we respect the unique culture and traditions of different countries, America will always be a voice for those aspirations that are universal. We will bear witness to the quiet dignity of reformers like Aung Sang Suu Kyi, to the bravery of Zimbabweans who cast their ballots in the face of beatings, to the hundreds of thousands who have marched silently through the streets of Iran. It is telling that the leaders of these governments fear the aspirations of their own people more than the power of any other nation. And it is the responsibility of all free people and free nations to make clear that these movements of hope and history, they have us on their side.

Let me also say this: The promotion of human rights cannot be about exhortation alone. At times, it must be coupled with painstaking diplomacy. I know that engagement with repressive regimes lacks the satisfying purity of indignation. But I also know that sanctions without outreach, condemnation without discussion, can carry forward only a crippling status quo. No repressive regime can move down a new path unless it has the choice of an open door.

In light of the Cultural Revolution's horrors, Nixon's meeting with Mao appeared inexcusable, and yet it surely helped set China on a path where millions of its citizens have been lifted from poverty and connected to open societies. Pope John Paul's engagement with Poland created space not just for the Catholic Church, but for labor leaders like Lech Walesa. Ronald Reagan's efforts on arms control and embrace of *perestroika* not only improved relations with the Soviet Union but empowered dissidents throughout Eastern Europe. There's no simple formula here. But we must try as best we can to balance isolation and engagement, pressure and incentives, so that human rights and dignity are advanced over time.

Third, a just peace includes not only civil and political rights, it must encompass economic security and opportunity. For to—true peace is not just freedom from fear, but freedom from want. It is undoubtedly true that development rarely takes root without security. It is also true that security does not exist where human beings do not have access to enough food, or clean water, or the medicine and shelter they need to survive. It does not exist where children can't aspire to a decent education or a job that supports a family. The absence of hope can rot a society from within.

And that's why helping farmers feed their own people or nations educate their children and care for the sick is not mere charity. It's also why the world must come together to confront climate change. There's little scientific dispute that if we do nothing, we will face more drought, more famine, more mass displacement, all of which will fuel more conflict for decades. For this reason—and it's not merely scientists and environmental activists who call for swift and forceful action, it's military leaders in my own country and others who understand our common security hangs in the balance.

Agreements among nations, strong institutions, support for human rights, investments in development: All these are vital ingredients in bringing about the evolution that President Kennedy spoke about. And yet I do not believe that we will have the will, the determination, the staying power to complete this work without something more, and that's the continued expansion of our moral imagination, an insistence that there's something irreducible that we all share.

As the world grows smaller, you might think it would be easier for human beings to recognize how similar we are, to understand that we're all basically seeking the same things. That we all hope for the chance to live out our lives with some measure of happiness and fulfillment for ourselves and our families.

And yet somehow, given the dizzying pace of globalization, the cultural leveling of modernity, it perhaps comes as no surprise that people fear the loss of what they cherish in their particular identities: their race, their tribe, and perhaps most powerfully, their religion. In some places, this fear has led to conflict. At times, it even feels like we're moving backwards. We see it in the Middle East, as the conflict between Arabs

and Jews seems to harden. We see it in nations that are torn asunder by tribal lines.

And most dangerously, we see it in the way that religion is used to justify the murder of innocents by those who have distorted and defiled the great religion of Islam, and who attacked my country from Afghanistan. These extremists are not the first to kill in the name of God; the cruelties of the Crusades are amply recorded. But they remind us that no holy war can ever be a just war. For if you truly believe that you are carrying out divine will, then there is no need for restraint, no need to spare the pregnant mother, or the medic, or the Red Cross worker, or even a person of one own's faith. Such a warped view of religion is not just incompatible with the concept of peace, but I believe it's incompatible with the very purpose of faith. For the one rule that lies at the heart of every major religion is that we do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

Adhering to this law of love has always been the core struggle of human nature. For we are fallible; we make mistakes and fall victim to the temptations of pride and power and, sometimes, evil. Even those of us with the best of intentions will at times fail to right the wrongs before us.

But we do not have to think that human nature is perfect for us to still believe that the human condition can be perfected. We do not have to live in an idealized world to still reach for those ideals that will make it a better place. The nonviolence practiced by men like Gandhi and King may not have been practical or possible in every circumstance, but the love that they preached, their fundamental faith in human progress, that must always be the North Star that guides us on our journey.

For if we lose that faith, if we dismiss it as silly or naive, if we divorce it from the decisions that we make on issues of war and peace, then we lose what's best about humanity. We lose our sense of possibility. We lose our moral compass.

Like generations have before us, we must reject that future. As Dr. King said at this occasion so many years ago: "I refuse to accept despair as the final response to the ambiguities of history. I refuse to accept the idea that the 'isness' of man's present condition makes him morally incapable of reaching up for the eternal 'oughtness' that forever confronts him." Let us reach for the world that ought to be, that spark of the divine that still stirs within each of our souls.

Somewhere today, in the here and now, in the world as it is, a soldier sees he's outgunned, but stands firm to keep the peace. Somewhere today in this world, a young protestor awaits the brutality of her government, but has the courage to march on. Somewhere today, a mother facing punishing poverty still takes the time to teach her child, scrapes together what few coins she has to send that child to school because she believes that a cruel world still has a place for that child's dreams.

Let us live by their example. We can acknowledge that oppression will always be with us and still strive for justice. We can admit the intractability of depravation and still strive for dignity. Clear eyed, we can understand that there will be war and still strive for peace. We can do that, for that is the story of human progress. That's the hope of all the world, and at this moment of challenge, that must be our work here on Earth.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:44 p.m. at Oslo City Hall. In his remarks, he referred to King Harald V, Queen Sonja, Crown Prince Haakon, and Crown Princess Mette-Marit of Norway; former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa; President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia; Aung Sang Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma; and former President Lech Walesa of Poland. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at the Nobel Banquet in Oslo
December 10, 2009

Thank you very much. Your Majesties, Your Excellencies, Your Royal Highnesses, to all my friends, my family, this is obviously an extraordinary evening. And I must say, I was telling the committee members that having entirely exhausted myself with the speech this afternoon—[*laughter*]—I have—I spoke for a very long time—I have only a very few words to say.

First of all, I would like to thank the committee once again for the extraordinary confidence that they've placed in me and this great honor that I have received tonight. As I indicated before, no one was more surprised than me. [*Laughter*] And I have to say that when the Chairman spoke introducing me, I told him afterwards that I thought it was an excellent speech and that I was almost convinced that I deserved it. [*Laughter*]

I also wanted to pick up on a theme in both our speeches, and that is, the extraordinary power that this prize has in lifting up those who otherwise would be forgotten, in magnifying the cause of justice when it's confronting great resistance. In 1964, when Dr. King received this prize, the course of the civil rights movement was still uncertain. How that would play itself out was not yet entirely known. And for a Baptist preacher from the South to be lifted up on the international stage, to highlight the fact that this was not simply a parochial struggle but was rather a struggle for the ages, a struggle for the hearts and minds not just of the American people but of the world, and how we thought about each other and how we thought about minorities in countries everywhere, what extraordinary power that had. And as a consequence, I think it's fair to say that it helped to put the wind behind the sails of a movement that is largely responsible for both Michelle and my presence here tonight.

You know, it's obviously one of life's great ironies that Alfred Nobel, the man responsible for inventing dynamite—[*laughter*]—helped to establish this extraordinary moral force in the world. He bequeathed his largest share of fortune to the Nobel Prizes, and the roster of Nobel Laureates has grown to include not only the finest minds in science and literature and economics, but I think what captivates people most is the giants of peace that it has acknowledged.

When Alfred Nobel signed his last will and testament on November 27, 1895, it's not entirely clear that he could have foreseen the impact that his prizes would have. But he did know this truth: That our destinies are what we make of them, and that each of us in our own lives can do our part in order to make a more just and lasting peace and forge the kind of world that we want to bequeath to our children and our grandchildren. That has been the mission of the committee. It has carried out over these 108 years this charge with extraordinary diligence, creativity, and as I indicated today at lunch, great moral imagination. And so for that, I am grateful not only to the current committee but past committee members who I know are here. The world thanks you for the work that you do. And as a consequence, what I'd like to do is to propose a toast—once I get some wine. [*Laughter*]

I'd like to propose—actually, if you will bear with me, in Washington, in the Senate or the House, this is called a point of personal privilege. I don't want to make her cry, but I do want to say my sister is here tonight. And it was in—one of the earlier toasts discussed a passage in my book that talks about my mother and the values that she instilled in me, and I do think that it's worth noting that to the extent I am deserving of this esteemed prize, either now or in the future, it will be largely because of her and the largeness of her heart.

So to Alfred Nobel, *skal*. Cheers. Thank you. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:48 p.m. at the Grand Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to King Harald V, Queen Sonja, Crown Prince Haakon, and Crown Princess Mette-Marit of Norway; Thorbjorn Jagland, chairman, Norwegian Nobel Committee; and his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng.

Statement on the Observance of Hanukkah
December 11, 2009

Michelle and I send our warmest wishes to all who are celebrating Hanukkah around the world. The Hanukkah story of the Maccabees and the miracles they witnessed reminds us that faith and perseverance are powerful forces that can sustain us in difficult times and help us overcome even the greatest odds.

Hanukkah is not only a time to celebrate the faith and customs of the Jewish people, but for people of all faiths to celebrate the common aspirations we share. As families, friends, and neighbors gather together to kindle the lights, may Hanukkah's lessons inspire us all to give thanks for the blessings we enjoy, to find light in times of darkness, and to work together for a brighter, more hopeful tomorrow.

Memorandum on Eleventh Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation
December 11, 2009

Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense

Subject: Eleventh Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation

Under section 1008(b) of title 37, United States Code, every 4 years the President is required to complete a review of the compensation system for the uniformed service members of the Department of Defense, the Coast Guard, and the commissioned corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Public Health Service. You will be my Executive Agent for this review, consulting me as required.

It is not the powerful weapons that make our Nation the strongest in the world. It is the spirit and skill of our men and women in uniform. The current military compensation system has allowed us to recruit and retain the highest caliber men and women in our Nation's history, and that system needs to be regularly validated for sufficiency and responsiveness.

In these times of unprecedented expectations and demands, our attention must be on the well being of our personnel in uniform. The defense of the homeland and ongoing overseas operations require us to examine and determine whether compensation levels are sufficient to sustain current and future efforts to recruit and retain the right skill set and experience level.

I would like your review to focus on the following areas:

1. the compensation for service performed in a combat zone, combat operation, or hostile fire area, or while exposed to a hostile fire event;
2. the Reserve and National Guard's compensation and benefits for consistency with their current and planned utilization;
3. the compensation benefits available to wounded warriors, caregivers, and survivors of those fallen service members; and
4. the pay incentives for critical career fields such as mental health professionals, linguists/translators, remotely piloted vehicle operators, and special operations personnel.

As the Executive Agent for the Eleventh Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, you shall ensure that representatives of other relevant executive branch agencies, such as the Secretaries of Homeland Security, Commerce, and Health and Human Services, participate in this review, as appropriate. The review should be completed within 1 year of its initiation, with an update submitted to the President after 6 months, and a preview of the

results 30 days prior to the end of the review period.

On behalf of the American people, I thank you in advance for your leadership in this area, your thoughtful resource analysis, and, more importantly, your sincere concern for our uniformed personnel and their families.

BARACK OBAMA

The President's Weekly Address
December 12, 2009

Over the past 2 years, more than 7 million Americans have lost their jobs and factories and businesses across our country have been shuttered. In one way or another, we've all been touched by the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression.

The difficult steps we've taken since January have helped to break our fall and begin to get us back on our feet. The economy is growing again. The flood of job losses we saw at the beginning of this year slowed to a relative trickle last month. These are all good signs for the future, but they're little comfort to all our neighbors who remain out of a job. And my solemn commitment is to work every day, in every way that I can, to push this recovery forward and build a new foundation for our lasting growth and prosperity.

That's why I announced some additional steps this week to spur private sector hiring. We'll give an added boost to small businesses across our Nation through additional tax cuts and access to lending they desperately need to grow. We'll rebuild more of our vital infrastructure and promote advanced manufacturing in clean energy to put Americans to work doing the work we need done. And I've called for the extension of unemployment insurance and health benefits to help those who've lost their jobs weather these storms until we reach that brighter day.

But even as we dig our way out of this deep hole, it's important that we address the irresponsibility and recklessness that got us into this mess in the first place. Some of it was the result of an era of easy credit, when millions of Americans borrowed beyond their means, bought homes they couldn't afford, and assumed that housing prices would always rise and the day of reckoning would never come.

But much of it was due to the irresponsibility of large financial institutions on Wall Street that gambled on risky loans and complex financial products, seeking short-term profits and big bonuses with little regard for long-term consequences. It was, as some put it, risk management without the management. And their actions, in the absence of strong oversight, intensified the cycle of bubble and bust and led to a financial crisis that threatened to bring down the entire economy.

It was a disaster that could have been avoided if we'd had clearer rules of the road for Wall Street and actually enforced them. We can't change that history. But we have an absolute responsibility to learn from it and take steps to prevent a repeat of the crisis from which we are still recovering.

And that's why I've proposed a series of financial reforms that would target the abuses we've seen and leave us less exposed to the kind of breakdown we just experienced. They would bring new transparency and accountability to the financial markets, so that the kind of risky dealings that sparked the crisis would be fully disclosed and properly regulated.

They would give us the tools to ensure that the failure of one large bank or financial institution won't spread like a virus throughout the entire financial system. Because we should never again find ourselves in the position in which our only choices are bailing out banks or letting our economy collapse.

And they would consolidate the consumer protection functions currently spread across half a dozen agencies and vest them in a new consumer financial protection agency. This agency would have the authority to put an end to misleading and dishonest practices by banks and institutions that market financial products

like credit cards and debit cards, mortgage and auto and payday loans.

These are all commonsense reforms that respond to the obvious problems exposed by the financial crisis. But as we've learned so many times before, common sense doesn't always prevail in Washington.

Just this week, Republican leaders in the House summoned more than 100 key lobbyists for the financial industry to a pep rally and urged them to redouble their efforts to block meaningful financial reform. Not that they needed the encouragement. The industry has already spent more than $300 million on lobbying to influence the debate this year.

The special interests and their agents in Congress claim that reforms like the consumer financial protection agency will stifle consumer choice and that updated rules and oversight will frustrate innovation in the financial markets. But Americans don't choose to be victimized by mysterious fees and changing terms and pages and pages of fine print. And while innovation should be encouraged, risky schemes that threaten our entire economy should not. We can't afford to let the same phony arguments and bad habits of Washington kill financial reform and leave American consumers and our economy vulnerable to another meltdown.

Yesterday the House passed comprehensive reform legislation that incorporates many of the essential changes we need, and the Senate Banking Committee is working on its own package of reforms. I urge both Houses to act as quickly as possible to pass real reform that restores free and fair markets, in which recklessness and greed are thwarted and hard work, responsibility, and competition are rewarded, reforms that work for businesses, investors, and consumers alike.

That's how we'll keep our economy and our institutions strong. That's how we'll restore a sense of responsibility and accountability to both Wall Street and Washington. And that's how we'll safeguard everything the American people are working so hard to build: a broad-based recovery, a lasting prosperity, and a renewed American Dream. Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 1:30 p.m. on December 11 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for broadcast on December 12. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 11, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on December 12. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at "Christmas in Washington"
December 13, 2009

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat. Good evening, and merry Christmas. Thank you, George Lopez. Thank you to all the incredible performers for sharing your wonderful holiday spirit with us this evening: Mary J. Blige, Neil Diamond, Sugarland, Rob Thomas, Usher, and Justin Bieber——

First Lady Michelle Obama. Bieber.

The President. Bieber—[*laughter*]—he was just discovered—[*laughter*]—the American Family Choir, and the Washington Youth Choir and the United States Army Herald Trumpets.

And to the producers and crew behind the scenes, thank you for bringing us together at this historic and beautiful National Building Museum and for bringing this celebration to our fellow Americans.

For many of your families, this is a holiday tradition, the 28th "Christmas in Washington" celebration. For our family, this is our first Christmas in the White House. And Michelle and I are honored to be with you. And I know that Malia, Sasha, and my mother-in-law, Marian Robinson, want to wish you all a wonderful holiday, and I'm sure they're watching here at home this evening.

This season we celebrate that sacred moment, the birth of a child and the message of love He would preach to the world: That we are our brother's keeper; that we are our

sister's keeper; that "pure in heart," we do unto others as we would have them do unto us; that we devote ourselves to "good works"; that we are summoned to be peacemakers.

More than 2,000 years later, that spirit still inspires us. It's why this celebration tonight benefits the Children's National Medical Center and all the children whose lives they touch and they save. And it's why, as so many of our fellow citizens struggle through tough times, we are called upon to help neighbors in need. And it's why, with our men and women in uniform serving far from home in harm's way, our fervent wish remains, this season and all seasons, let there be peace on Earth.

To all Americans, from our family to yours, merry Christmas, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 7 p.m. at the National Building Museum. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers George Lopez, Mary J. Blige, Neil L. Diamond, Robert K. Thomas, Usher Raymond IV, and Justin D. Bieber. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 14.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Leaders of the Financial Services Industry
December 14, 2009

Good afternoon, everybody. I've just finished a candid and productive meeting with the CEOs of 12 of our Nation's largest financial institutions. I asked them to come to Washington today, at the end of this difficult year for their industry but also for the economy, to discuss where we've been, what we expect of them going forward, and how we can work together to accelerate economic recovery.

Our Nation's banks play, and have always played, a crucial role in our national economy, from providing loans for homes and cars and colleges to supplying the capital that allows entrepreneurs to turn ideas into products and businesses to grow to helping people save for a rainy day and a secure retirement. So it's clear that each of us has a stake in ensuring the strength and the vitality of the financial system.

And that's why 1 year ago, when many of these institutions were on the verge of collapse—a predicament largely of their own making, oftentimes because they failed to manage risk properly—we took difficult and, frankly, unpopular steps to pull them back from the brink, steps that were necessary not just to save our financial system, but to save our economy as a whole.

Today, due to the timely loans from the American people, our financial system has stabilized, the stock market has sprung back to life, our economy is growing, and our banks are once again recording profits. A year ago, many doubted that we would ever recover these investments, but we've managed this program well. This morning another major bank announced that it would be repaying taxpayers in full, and when they do, we'll have collected 60 percent of the money owed, with interest. We expect other institutions to follow suit, and we are determined to recover every last dime for the American taxpayer.

So my main message in today's meeting was very simple: that America's banks received extraordinary assistance from American taxpayers to rebuild their industry, and now that they're back on their feet, we expect an inordinate—extraordinary commitment from them to help rebuild our economy.

That starts with finding ways to help creditworthy small and medium-sized businesses get the loans that they need to open their doors, grow their operations, and create new jobs. This is something I hear about from businessowners and entrepreneurs across America, that despite their best efforts, they're unable to get loans. At the same time, I've been hearing from bankers that they're willing to lend, but face a shortage of creditworthy individuals and businesses.

Now, no one wants banks making the kinds of risky loans that got us into this situation in the first place. And it's true that regulators are requiring them to hold more of their capital as a hedge against the kind of problems that we saw last year. But given the difficulty businesspeople are having as lending has declined and given the exceptional assistance banks received to get

them through a difficult time, we expect them to explore every responsible way to help get our economy moving again.

And I heard from these executives that they are engaging in various programs, like second look programs, hiring more folks, raising their target goals in terms of lending, all of which sounded positive. But we expect some results, because I'm getting too many letters from small businesses who explain that they are creditworthy and banks that they've had a long-term relationship with are still having problems giving them loans. We think that's something that we can—that can be fixed. And so I urged these institutions here today to go back and take a third and fourth look about how they are operating when it comes to small-business and medium-sized business lending.

We also discussed the need to pass meaningful financial reform that will protect American consumers from exploitation and American—the American economy from another financial crisis of the kind which we just came out of.

I noted the resistance of many of the financial sectors to these reforms; the industry has lobbied vigorously against some of them—some of these reforms on Capitol Hill. So I made it clear that it is both in the country's interest and, ultimately, in the financial industry's interest to have updated rules of the road to prevent abuse and excess. Short-term gains are of little value to our banks if they lead to long-term chaos in the economy.

And I made very clear that I have no intention of letting their lobbyists thwart reforms necessary to protect the American people. If they wish to fight commonsense consumer protections, that's a fight I'm more than willing to have.

The way I see it, having recovered from—with the help of the American Government and the American taxpayer, our banks now have a greater obligation to the goal of a wider recovery, a more stable system, and more broadly shared prosperity.

So I urged them to work with us in Congress to finish the job of reforming our financial system to bring transparency and accountability to the financial markets, to ensure that the failure of one bank or financial institution won't spread throughout the entire system, and to help protect consumers from misleading and dishonest practices with products like credit and debit cards, with mortgages and auto and payday loans.

Now, I should note that around the table, all of the financial industry executives said they supported financial regulatory reform. The problem is there's a big gap between what I'm hearing here in the White House and the activities of lobbyists on behalf of these institutions or associations of which they're a member up on Capitol Hill. I urged them to close that gap, and they assured me that they would make every effort to do so.

In the end, my interest isn't in vilifying any one person or institution or industry; it's not to dictate to them or micromanage their compensation practices, to ensure that consumers and. My job is to ensure that consumers and the larger economy are protected from risky speculation and predatory practices, that credit is flowing, that businesses can grow, and jobs are once again being created at the pace we need.

Some of the banks and financial institutions have taken small but positive steps to improve lending to small and medium-sized businesses, as I indicated. They've begun reworking mortgages that are now underwater because of declining home values, and have—they have acknowledged that much more needs to be done going forward. Many have begun to follow our lead in shifting from paying huge cash bonuses to awarding long-term stock, which will encourage more prudent decisionmaking, but as I indicated in this meeting, they certainly could be doing more on this front as well.

Now, these efforts reflect a recognition, ultimately, that the fate of our financial institutions is tied to the fate of our economy and our country, and these institutions can't endure if workers don't have jobs and businesses can't grow and consumers don't have money to spend. Ultimately, in this country, we rise and fall together, banks and small businesses, consumers and large corporations, and we have a shared interest in working together to ensure a

lasting recovery that will benefit all of us and not just some of us.

I called today's meeting with this in mind. And I told the group that I look forward to continued engagement and progress in the months and years ahead.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:38 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Michel Sleiman of Lebanon and an Exchange With Reporters
December 14, 2009

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody. I want to welcome President Sleiman and his delegation for the excellent visit that we've had.

I thought that this meeting was critical because the relationship between the United States and Lebanon is critical. We have a strong friendship between the two countries. Part of that results from the fact that we have 2 million Lebanese Americans who have made extraordinary contributions to the life of the United States and continue to do so. Obviously, Lebanon is a critical country in a critical region, and we want to do everything that we can to encourage a strong, independent, and democratic Lebanon.

The President has, I think, done extraordinary work in managing what is a difficult situation. And we have continued to see progress in dealing with a lot of the crosscurrents that exist not only in Lebanon but also in the region as a whole.

The United States wants to be a partner in this process. We want to strengthen Lebanese Armed Forces so that they can help to secure the sovereignty and territory of Lebanon. We want to make sure that there's full implementation of United States—United Nations resolutions that help keep the peace in the region and ensure Lebanon's stability.

We both agree that the issues of Middle East peace are linked to the issues that exist inside Lebanon, and so that the more we can work together to encourage the parties involved—not only Israel and the Palestinians but also the Israelis and the Syrians, for example—to have constructive dialogue and try to negotiate out of the current impasse, the better off Lebanon will be, the better off the world will be.

We also want to make sure that the United States assistance to Lebanon is not seen just through a security lens. As I indicated in my speech in Oslo last week, part of peace is economic opportunity and justice in civil society. And so to the extent that we can help provide support around issues like education that promote opportunity within Lebanon, we want to do so.

Let me just close by saying here in the South Lawn, there is actually a Lebanese cedar tree that was planted 30 years ago, a testimony to difficult times for both the United States and Lebanon, but also the fact that we remain hopeful about the future. That tree is strong; it is thriving. I think it represents the friendship between the United States and Lebanon. And we will continue to water that tree just as we continue to nurture the relationship between our two countries.

And I don't know if you want to do a quick translation. I apologize; I should have stopped in between my comments.

Interpreter. Yes, Mr. President. Thank you, sir.

[*At this point, President Obama's remarks were translated.*]

President Obama. Shukran.

President Sleiman. Thank you very much. I am pleased—I had the pleasure today to come here in response to the invitation of his President—of President Obama to the United States, and I had the pleasure to meet President Obama and high officials in the United States administration.

We have with President Obama a common policy of openness and dialogue. And we believe that the election of President Obama was a great mark in history, especially his speech in Cairo, which gave hope to find peaceful solutions to controversial issues. In addition to that, President Obama gaining of Nobel Peace Prize also gave hope to people across the world, and especially the people of the Arab countries, to find a peaceful solution that would return the rights of the people of Palestine, and that would ensure withdrawal and grant Palestinian refugees the right of return.

We have asserted our attachment and our support to the Arab Peace Initiative, which was stated in 2002 in Beirut and which was affirmed in the Doha summit, which grants all the rights back to their owners. We have also discussed the situation in Lebanon, which had witnessed great stability last year and this year, be it on the political, security, and economic levels.

We also discussed the Israeli threats against Lebanon that are taking place and that place obstacles to the economic growth of the country. We asked President Obama and the United States to exert further pressure on Israel to implement Resolution 1701 and to withdraw from Israeli—Lebanese—sorry—occupied territories, namely from the village of Ghajar, Kfar Shouba Hills, and the Shebaa Farms.

We also talked about the bilateral relations between Lebanon and the United Nations. We believe we have many common denominators with the United States. The first one are Americans of Lebanese descent which play a great role in the United States and also the shared value that we have with the United States and its people, namely the value of democracy, respect of the human rights, public freedoms, rejection of extremism and fundamentalism, and confronting terrorism.

And Lebanon has paid a very heavy price to preserve these values, a heavy price because it costed it souls of its people, its infrastructure, and also, it had a heavy economical prices, especially that a good part of the Lebanese youth were obliged to emigrate.

We have asked for the support of the United Nations on various levels. First of all, on the military level, because a strong army and strong armed forces could defend Lebanon against hostilities of the enemy. Also, it could allow the country to confront terrorism, which poses dangers not only on Lebanon but on humanity as a whole.

The second level is the economic level in order to promote new—more economic growth and social justice, because injustice is sometimes taken as a pretext by terrorists and fundamentalist organizations to recruit people and incite them to terrorism.

We also asked for the political support of the United States, for it to take a political position to support Lebanon and to support a peaceful solution for the Middle East crisis that cannot be done at the detriment of Lebanon and to reject settlement. We insist on the rights of return for Palestinians because as it is stated in the Arab Peace Initiative, we reject any form of settlement since it contradicts our Constitution and our special circumstances. So did the Arab Peace Initiative say as well.

In 2010, and since we have been elected as a nonpermanent member of the United Nations Security Council, we will keep on cooperating and coordinating with the United States on issues related to the world so that we can ensure the—Lebanon's interests and so that we can represent the position of the Arab League and the general interest of all of humanity and reach better solutions.

President Obama. You know what? Actually, hold on. I'm going to take one question. Go ahead.

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Mr. President, did you talk about Hizballah weapons? Because it's my understanding that the Lebanese Government now considers it an internal issue and doesn't want the Security Council to deal with it.

President Obama. We did discuss this. And as President Sleiman said, we discussed the enforcement of 1701. We've made progress on this front, but it's incomplete. President Sleiman emphasized his concerns with respect to Israel. I want to be clear that I emphasized to him our concerns about the extensive arms that are smuggled into Lebanon that

potentially serve as a threat to Israel. And it is in the interests, I think, of all parties concerned to make sure that enforcement is exerted with respect to such smuggling as well as to any other issues.

So one of the things that I want to make clear is that President Sleiman and I aren't going to agree on every issue with respect to how Israel, Lebanon, the Palestinians, Syria are interacting. What we do share is a commitment to resolve these issues through dialogue and negotiations as opposed to through violence.

And that is consistent with the democratic traditions of Lebanon. That's consistent with what we believe is in the interests of both Lebanon as well as the other countries in the region. And we are going to continue to be promoting those processes that bring parties together, even though there are going to be some strong disagreements with respect to what the terms, for example, of a final peace between Israel and the Palestinians may be. And I'm confident that we can arrive at those—such an agreement as long as all the parties are entering into it in good faith.

Okay. All right, thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:51 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Sleiman spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Members of the Business Community in Alexandria, Virginia

December 15, 2009

The President. Hello, everybody. Hello! Hello! Thank you, guys. Thank you. Everybody, please, have a seat.

We've got a couple of special guests here today. First of all, the outstanding Senator from the great State—Commonwealth of Virginia, Senator Mark Warner is here. Where's Mark? Right there. We've got a couple of champions for job creation here in Northern Virginia: Gerry Connolly and Jim Moran. Can I just ask how come they got the Home Depot thing and you guys don't have it? [*Laughter*] What, the Senators are too cool to put it on? What's going on here? [*Laughter*]

Working to jump-start our retrofit efforts around the country, Senator Jeff Merkley and Congressman Peter Welch are here as well. We've got Alexandria Mayor William Euille. Where's William? There he is. Good to see you, Bill. And we've got Frank Blake and his team here at Home Depot. Where's Frank? There he is.

So seeing how Christmas is just around the corner, and we're at Home Depot, I thought I might knock out some of my holiday shopping. [*Laughter*] I figure my Energy Secretary wants a few million energy efficient light bulbs. [*Laughter*] My Press Secretary wants something that will prevent leaks.

Audience member. Ooh!

The President. Come on, guys. [*Laughter*] It took a while there for—[*laughter*]. But I've also come here to spend some time with workers and contractors and manufacturers and small-business owners who've been especially hard hit by our economic downturn. A few of us just spent some time at a roundtable talking about the role they want to play in job creation and in our economic recovery and how government can best help to give them a boost.

Now, I don't need to remind them or any of you about the situation we found ourselves in at the beginning of this year. The economy was in a freefall. As a result of our financial crisis, folks couldn't access affordable credit to run their businesses or take out an auto loan or a student loan or in some cases pay their mortgages. Home values were plummeting, and we were hemorrhaging about 700,000 jobs per month.

Now, today, the economy is growing for the first time in more than a year, and November's job report was the best that we've had in nearly 2 years. But the fact is, even though we've stopped the rapid job losses that we were seeing just a few months ago, more than 7 million

Americans have lost their jobs in the 2 years since this recession began. Unemployment still stands at 10 percent. So we're not finished with our task, far from it. We've got a lot of work to do. And I promise you, in the White House, we're hard at work every single day until every single person who wants a job can find a job.

And that's why last week I announced some additional targeted steps to spur private sector hiring and give an added boost to small businesses by building on the tax cuts in the Recovery Act and increasing access to the loans desperately needed for small businesses to grow. We'll rebuild and modernize even more of our transportation and communication networks across the country. And I called for the extension of emergency relief like unemployment insurance and health benefits to help those who've lost their jobs, while boosting consumer spending and promoting job growth.

Now, we also want to take some strategic surgical steps in areas that are going to generate the greatest number of jobs, while generating the greatest value for our economy. And from the moment we took office, even as we took immediate steps to deal with the financial crisis, we began investing in newer, stronger foundations for lasting growth, one that would free us from the cycle of boom and bust that has been so painful, one that can create good jobs and opportunities for a growing middle class. That's at the heart of our efforts, and clean energy can be a powerful engine for creating that kind of growth.

And that's why the Recovery Act included the single biggest investment in job-creating clean energy in our history: in renewable sources of energy, in advanced manufacturing; in clean vehicle technology, in a bigger, better, smarter electric grid that can carry clean, homegrown energy from the places that harness it to the places that need it.

And after these investments have been given the better part of a year to take root, a picture of their impact is starting to emerge. I just received a report from Vice President Biden that confirms that as a result of the steps that we've taken, a major transformation of our economy is well underway. We are on track to double renewable energy production and double our capacity to manufacture clean energy components like wind turbines and solar panels right here in the United States by the year 2012—doubling it.

But there's a lot more that we can do, and that's what I've come to Home Depot to talk about. In our Nation's buildings, our homes and our offices consume almost 40 percent of the energy we use and contribute almost 40 percent of the carbon pollution that we produce and everybody is talking about right now in Copenhagen. Homes built in the first half of the last century can use about 50 percent more energy than homes that are built today. And because most of our homes and offices aren't energy efficient, much of that energy just goes to waste, while costing our families and businesses money they can't afford to throw away.

The simple act of retrofitting these buildings to make them more energy efficient—installing new windows and doors, insulation, roofing, sealing leaks, modernizing heating and cooling equipment—is one of the fastest, easiest, and cheapest things we can do to put Americans back to work, while saving money and reducing harmful emissions.

As a result of a variety of investments made under the Recovery Act, including State and local energy grants, we're on pace to upgrade the homes of half a million Americans by this time next year—half a million Americans—boosting the economy, saving money and energy, creating clean energy jobs that can't be outsourced. But this is an area that has huge potential to grow. That's why I'm calling on Congress to provide new temporary incentives for Americans to make energy efficiency retrofit investments in their homes. And we want them to do it soon.

I know the idea may not be very glamorous, although I get really excited about it. We were at the roundtable, and somebody said insulation is not sexy. I disagree. [*Laughter*] Frank, don't you think insulation is sexy stuff? [*Laughter*] Here's what's sexy about it: saving money. Think about it this way: If you haven't upgraded your home yet, it's not just heat or cool air that's escaping, it's energy and money

that you are wasting. If you saw $20 bills just sort of floating through the window up into the atmosphere, you'd try to figure out how you were going to keep that. But that's exactly what's happening because of the lack of efficiency in our buildings.

So what we want to do is create incentives that stimulate consumer spending, because folks buy materials from home improvement stores like this one, which then buys them from manufacturers. It spurs hiring because local contractors and construction workers do the installation. It saves consumers money—perhaps hundreds of dollars off their utility bills each year—and it reduces our energy consumption in the process.

In other words, a lot of—most of this stuff is going to pay for itself. You put in the insulation, you weatherize your home now, you will make up that money in a year or 2 years or 3 years, and then everything after that is just gravy. But the challenge for a lot of people is getting that money up front. They know that this is a smart thing to do, but times are tight right now, and it's hard to afford making that capital investment. And that's where the Government can come in to provide the incentive to help people make that initial investment so that they can recover that money over the long term.

These incentives will build on the work that my administration is doing to eliminate existing barriers to retrofitting millions of homes across the country. My Middle Class Task Force and the Council on Environmental Quality recently released a report titled "Recovery Through Retrofit" that explains some of these hurdles and how we can overcome them: providing homeowners with straightforward and reliable information on retrofitting their homes, reducing their costs to do it, and ensuring that we've got a well trained workforce ready to make it happen.

So I think this is an extraordinary idea. All the ideas that we've discussed were talked about at the jobs forum we held at the White House a couple of weeks ago. And in fact, Frank Blake was there and mentioned that 30 percent of Home Depot's business is made up of small contractors of five or fewer employees who often do this kind of work. And they and the folks that I met with earlier know just how important a program like this could be.

The economic downturn hit both small contractors and our broader construction industry especially hard. Construction unemployment reached 21 percent in the beginning of this year. The investments we made under the Recovery Act has helped, but obviously, there's a lot more work to do to put construction workers and millions of other Americans who are ready and eager to rebuild America and move our recovery forward back on the job again. And we're not going to rest until we do it.

So it's fitting that we're here today at Home Depot with folks who play a vital role in helping America's families build strong homes and strengthen the ones that they've got, because that's exactly what we're trying to do, rebuild our—rebuild America's house on a stronger foundation of growth and prosperity. It's not going to be easy, but we've got the concrete poured. And one thing is clear: We're moving in the right direction. So I promise you we are going to get this job done. Together, we can leave something for future generations that makes America that much stronger.

And I just want to emphasize one last point. There's a lot—a lot of times there's an argument about economic growth versus the environment. And in the debate that's going on about climate change right now, a lot of people say we can't afford to deal with these emissions to the environment. But the fact of the matter is, energy efficiency is a perfect example of how this can be a win-win. Manufacturers like Owen Corning, their—whose CEO is here today—they win because they produce this stuff. And those are American jobs. And right now I just heard from the CEO, because Australia put an incentive to do exactly what we're talking about, they've seen a huge increase in their volume of experts—exports to Australia. Well, why can't we do the same thing here?

When it comes to contractors, contractors all around the country know that this is work they can do, they can do effectively, they can do well. And it's a reliable business. It's not going to be subject to as many of the vacillations as home sales are in the current environment where you've got a soft housing market. So this can

help fill the void in a major industry that's taken a big hit.

And the workers—we have somebody who just got trained and is already on the job crawling through attics and putting all this stuff together. Over the course of 6 months or a year, somebody can get trained effectively. And LIUNA is doing terrific work with this, its apprenticeship program. And what this means is that people who are unemployed right now, they can get a marketable skill that they can take anywhere.

So this is a smart thing to do, and we've got to get beyond this point where we think that somehow being smart on energy is a job destroyer. It is a job creator. But it's going to require some imagination and some foresight, and it requires us to all work together. And that's what this White House is committed to doing. I know that's what all of you are committed to doing.

We are going to generate so much business for you, Frank, we are going to generate so much work for you guys from LIUNA, we're going to create so much business—so many business opportunities for contractors here that over the course of the next several years, people are going to see this, I think, as an extraordinary opportunity. And it's going to help America turn the corner when it comes to energy use.

I'm excited about it. I hope you are too. See, I told you, insulation is sexy. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:09 a.m. at the Home Depot. In his remarks, he referred to Frank Blake, chairman and chief executive officer, Home Depot; and Michael H. Thaman, chairman and chief executive officer, Owens Corning. The President also referred to LIUNA, the Laborers' International Union of North America.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Senate Democrats on Health Care Reform

December 15, 2009

Hello, everybody. We just had a very productive session about the final stages of health care reform in the Senate. And from the discussions we had it's clear that we are on the precipice of an achievement that's eluded Congresses and Presidents for generations, an achievement that will touch the lives of nearly every American.

There are still some differences that have to be worked on. This was not a roll call; this was a broad-based discussion about how we move forward. But whatever differences remain, there is broad consensus around reforms that will finally—number one—protect every American from the worst practices in the health insurance industry. No longer will these companies be able to deny you coverage if you have a preexisting illness or condition. No longer will they be able to drop you from coverage when you get sick. No longer will you have to pay unlimited amounts out of your own pocket for the treatments that you need. We are all in agreement on those reforms.

We agree on reforms that will finally reduce the costs of health care. Families will save on their premiums; businesses that will see their costs rise if we do nothing will save money now and in the future. This plan will strengthen Medicare and extend the life of that program. And because it gets rid of the waste and inefficiencies in our health care system, this will be the largest deficit reduction plan in over a decade.

I just want to repeat this because there's so much misinformation about the cost issue here. You talk to every health care economist out there, and they will tell you that whatever ideas are—whatever ideas exist in terms of bending the cost curve and starting to reduce costs for families, businesses, and government, those elements are in this bill.

And in terms of deficits, because we keep on hearing these ads about how this is going to add to the deficit, the CBO has said that this is a deficit reduction, not a deficit increase. So all

the scare tactics out there, all the ads that are out there, are simply inaccurate.

Some of the same people who cited the CBO when it was saying it didn't reduce the deficit, saying CBO is the most credible possible arbiter of whether or not this adds to our deficit, now suddenly are ignoring what the CBO says.

Finally, we agree on reforms that will make coverage affordable for 30 million Americans who don't have it. Every day that goes by, another 14,000 Americans lose their health care coverage. A recent study shows that in the next decade, half of all Americans under the age of 65 will be without coverage at some point. On the other hand, if this reform passes—when it passes—for the very first time in their lives, these Americans will be able to provide health insurance for their families. And those Americans who are already covered will no longer have to live in fear that their family might fall through the cracks of the system we have now.

These aren't small changes; these are big changes. They represent the most significant reform of our health care system since the passage of Medicare. They will save money; they will save families money, they will save businesses money, and they will save government money. And they're going to save lives. And that's why this reform is supported by groups like the AARP who represents most of America's seniors. That's why this reform has to pass on our watch.

Now, let's be clear: The final bill won't include everything that everybody wants. No bill can do that. But what I told my former colleagues today is that we simply cannot allow differences over individual elements of this plan to prevent us from meeting our responsibility to solve a longstanding and urgent problem for the American people. They are waiting for us to act. They are counting on us to show leadership. And I don't intend to let them down, and neither do the people standing next to me. There's too much at stake for families who can't pay their medical bills, or see a doctor when they need to, or get the treatment they need. The stakes are enormous for them.

The stakes are enormous for businesses, who are already seeing their premiums go up 15, 20, 30 percent. A lot of the critics of this entire process fail to note what happens if nothing gets done, and the American people have to be very clear about this: If we don't get this done, your premiums are guaranteed to go up. If this does not get done, more employers are going to drop coverage cause they can't afford it. If this does not get done, it is guaranteed that Medicare and Medicaid will blow a hole through our budget.

Those things are guaranteed. That's the status quo. That is the trajectory that we are currently on. I don't intend to have that happen. And I believe that the Senate doesn't intend to have that happen. And I think any fair reading of this bill will indicate that all the criteria that I laid out when I met before a joint session have now been met. It is deficit neutral, it bends the cost curve, it covers 30 million Americans who don't have health insurance, and it has extraordinary insurance reforms in there that make sure that we're preventing abuse.

By the way, it also does things that Tom Harkin has been a champion of for years: prevention and wellness, to make sure that people are getting the care they need and the checkups they need and the screenings they need before they get sick, which will save all of us money and reduce pressures on emergency rooms all across the country.

So there are still disagreements that have to be ironed out. There is still work to be done in the next few days. I think it's important for every single Member of the Senate to take a careful look at what's in the bill.

We welcome the scrutiny from the press. Recently there was an article in the New Yorker that talked about all the cost savings and how important they are going to be in terms of bending the cost curve over the long term.

I am absolutely confident that if the American people know what's in this bill and if the Senate knows what's in this bill that this is going to pass, because it's right for America. And I'm feeling cautiously optimistic that we can get this done and start rolling up our sleeves and getting to work improving the lives of the American people.

All right. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:15 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Jobs Creation Legislation
December 16, 2009

All over our country this holiday season, Americans who lost their jobs in the great recession are looking for work. Today the House answered with some productive ideas to respond to this great need, offering new initiatives including repairing our roads and bridges, providing relief to Americans who have lost their jobs, and preventing layoffs at the State and local level. They complement the proposals I made last week to buttress small businesses with new tax cuts and increased lending and provide incentives to consumers who retrofit their homes. Some may think standing by and taking no action is the right approach, but for the millions of Americans still out of work, inaction is unacceptable.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Global Deployments of United States Combat-Equipped Armed Forces
December 16, 2009

Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am providing this supplemental consolidated report, prepared by my Administration and consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93–148), as part of my efforts to keep the Congress informed about global deployments of U.S. Armed Forces equipped for combat. This supplemental report covers ongoing U.S. contingency operations overseas.

Since October 7, 2001, the United States has conducted combat operations in Afghanistan against al-Qa'ida terrorists and their Taliban supporters, and has deployed various combat-equipped forces to a number of locations in the Central, Pacific, European, Southern, and Africa Command areas of operation in support of those and other overseas operations. These operations and deployments remain ongoing and were previously reported consistent with Public Law 107–40 and the War Powers Resolution.

In response to the terrorist threat, I will direct additional measures, as necessary, in the exercise of the right of the United States to self-defense and to protect U.S. citizens and interests. Such measures may include short-notice deployments of special operations and other forces for sensitive operations in various locations throughout the world. It is not possible to know at this time the precise scope or the duration of the deployments of U.S. Armed Forces necessary to counter the terrorist threat to the United States.

United States Armed Forces, with the assistance of numerous international partners, continue to conduct the U.S. campaign to pursue al-Qa'ida terrorists and to eliminate support to al-Qa'ida. These operations have been successful in seriously degrading al-Qa'ida's capabilities. United States Armed Forces, with the assistance of numerous international partners, brought an end to the Taliban's leadership of Afghanistan. Our forces are actively pursuing and engaging remaining al-Qa'ida and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. The total number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan is approximately 68,000, of which over 34,000 are assigned to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. The U.N. Security Council authorized ISAF in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1386 on December 20, 2001, and has reaffirmed its authorization since that time, most recently for a 12-month period from October 13, 2009, in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1890 on October 8, 2009. The mission of ISAF, under NATO command and in partnership with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, is to conduct population-centric counterinsurgency operations, enable expanded and effective Afghan National Security Forces, and support improved governance and development in order to protect the Afghan people and provide a secure environment for sustainable

security. Presently, 43 nations contribute to ISAF, including all 28 NATO Allies.

The United States continues to detain several hundred al-Qa'ida and Taliban fighters who are believed to pose a continuing threat to the United States and its interests. The combat-equipped forces deployed since January 2002 to Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in the U.S. Southern Command area of operation, continue to conduct secure detention operations for the approximately 230 detainees at Guantanamo Bay under Public Law 107–40 and consistent with principles of the law of war.

The U.N. Security Council authorized a Multinational Force (MNF) in Iraq, under unified command, in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1511 on October 16, 2003, and reaffirmed its authorization in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1546 on June 8, 2004, U.N. Security Council Resolution 1637 on November 8, 2005, U.N. Security Council Resolution 1723 on November 28, 2006, and U.N. Security Council Resolution 1790 on December 18, 2007; the authorization was not renewed in 2009. Since the expiration of the authorization and mandate for the MNF in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1790 on December 31, 2008, U.S. forces have continued operations to support Iraq in its efforts to maintain security and stability in Iraq pursuant to the bilateral Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities during Their Temporary Presence in Iraq, which entered into force on January 1, 2009. These contributions have included, but have not been limited to, assisting in building the capability of the Iraqi security forces, supporting the development of Iraq's political institutions, improving local governance, enhancing ministerial capacity, and providing critical humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to the Iraqis. The United States contribution of forces to the Iraq mission fluctuates over time, depending on the conditions in theater as determined by the commanders on the ground; the present U.S. contribution is approximately 116,000 U.S. military personnel.

In furtherance of U.S. efforts against terrorists who pose a continuing and imminent threat to the United States, its friends, its allies, and our forces abroad, the United States continues to work with partners around the globe. These efforts include the deployment of U.S. combat-equipped forces to assist in enhancing the counterterrorism capabilities of our friends and allies. United States combat-equipped forces continue to be located in the Horn of Africa region.

In addition, the United States continues to conduct maritime interception operations on the high seas in the areas of responsibility of all of the geographic combatant commands. These maritime operations are aimed at stopping the movement, arming, and financing of international terrorists.

As noted in previous reports regarding U.S. contributions in support of peacekeeping efforts in Kosovo, the U.N. Security Council authorized Member States to establish a NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244 on June 10, 1999. The original mission of KFOR was to monitor, verify, and, when necessary, enforce compliance with the Military Technical Agreement between NATO and the then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (now Serbia), while maintaining a safe and secure environment. Today, KFOR deters renewed hostilities and, with local authorities and international institutions, contributes to the maintenance of a safe and secure environment.

Currently, 24 NATO Allies contribute to KFOR. Eight non-NATO countries also participate by providing military and other support personnel. The United States contribution to KFOR is about 1,475 U.S. military personnel, or approximately 11 percent of the total strength of approximately 12,500 personnel. The United States forces participating in KFOR have been assigned to the eastern region of Kosovo, but also have operated in other areas of the country based on mission requirements. For U.S. KFOR forces, as for KFOR generally, helping to maintain a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement remain the principal military tasks. KFOR operates under NATO command and control and rules of engagement, and coordinates with and supports the European Union (EU)-led International

Civilian Office and the EU Rule of Law Mission, within its means and capabilities. KFOR provides a security presence in towns, villages, and the countryside, and organizes checkpoints and patrols in key areas to provide security, to protect all segments of Kosovo's population, and to help instill a feeling of confidence across all ethnic communities throughout Kosovo. NATO periodically conducts formal reviews of KFOR's mission. These reviews provide a basis for assessing current force levels, future requirements, and recommendations for adjustments to KFOR's force structure and eventual withdrawal. NATO adopted the Joint Operations Area plan to regionalize and rationalize its force structure in the Balkans.

The Kosovo Police has primary responsibility for public safety and policing throughout Kosovo. KFOR also offers as-needed security assistance in response to civil unrest. KFOR augments security in particularly sensitive areas or in response to particular threats as events on the ground dictate.

In January 2009, the Government of Kosovo established the Kosovo Security Force (KSF). Separately, the Government of Kosovo began the process of dissolving the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC). The KSF is a lightly armed, civilian-led security force that provides crisis response, explosive ordnance disposal, and civil protection. The newly formed Ministry for the Kosovo Security Force provides civilian oversight and control for the KSF. KFOR provides technical and policy guidance to the KSF and assists with recruiting for new members, chairing selection boards that identify former KPC members suitable for service in the KSF, supervising NATO standard training programs for new recruits, and coordinating KSF equipment purchases and donations.

I have directed the participation of U.S. Armed Forces in all of these operations pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive. Officials of my Administration and I communicate regularly with the leadership and other Members of Congress with regard to these deployments, and we will continue to do so.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Robert C. Byrd, President pro tempore of the Senate.

Remarks at a Plenary Session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark
December 18, 2009

Good morning. It is an honor for me to join this distinguished group of leaders from nations around the world. We come here in Copenhagen because climate change poses a grave and growing danger to our people. All of you would not be here unless you, like me, were convinced that this danger is real. This is not fiction, it is science. Unchecked, climate change will pose unacceptable risks to our security, our economies, and our planet. This much we know.

The question then before us is no longer the nature of the challenge, the question is our capacity to meet it. For while the reality of climate change is not in doubt, I have to be honest, as the world watches us today, I think our ability to take collective action is in doubt right now, and it hangs in the balance. I believe we can act boldly and decisively in the face of a common threat. That's why I come here today not to talk but to act.

Now, as the world's largest economy and as the world's second largest emitter, America bears our responsibility to address climate change, and we intend to meet that responsibility. That's why we've renewed our leadership within international climate change negotiations. That's why we've worked with other nations to phase out fossil fuel subsidies. That's why we've taken bold action at home by

making historic investments in renewable energy, by putting our people to work increasing efficiency in our homes and buildings, and by pursuing comprehensive legislation to transform to a clean energy economy.

These mitigation actions are ambitious, and we are taking them not simply to meet global responsibilities. We are convinced, as some of you may be convinced, that changing the way we produce and use energy is essential to America's economic future, that it will create millions of new jobs, power new industries, keep us competitive, and spark new innovation. We're convinced, for our own self-interest, that the way we use energy, changing it to a more efficient fashion, is essential to our national security, because it helps to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and helps us deal with some of the dangers posed by climate change.

So I want this plenary session to understand, America is going to continue on this course of action to mitigate our emissions and to move towards a clean energy economy no matter what happens here in Copenhagen. We think it is good for us as well as good for the world. But we also believe that we will all be stronger, all be safer, all be more secure, if we act together. That's why it is in our mutual interest to achieve a global accord in which we agree to certain steps and to hold each other accountable to certain commitments.

After months of talk, after two weeks of negotiations, after innumerable side meetings, bilateral meetings, endless hours of discussion among negotiators, I believe that the pieces of that accord should now be clear.

First, all major economies must put forward decisive national actions that will reduce their emissions and begin to turn the corner on climate change. I'm pleased that many of us have already done so. Almost all the major economies have put forward legitimate targets, significant targets, ambitious targets. And I'm confident that America will fulfill the commitments that we have made, cutting our emissions in the range of 17 percent by 2020 and by more than 80 percent by 2050, in line with final legislation.

Second, we must have a mechanism to review whether we are keeping our commitments and exchange this information in a transparent manner. These measures need not be intrusive or infringe upon sovereignty. They must, however, ensure that an accord is credible and that we're living up to our obligations. Without such accountability any agreement would be empty words on a page. I don't know how you have an international agreement where we all are not sharing information and ensuring that we are meeting our commitments. That doesn't make sense. It would be a hollow victory.

Number three, we must have financing that helps developing countries adapt, particularly the least developed and most vulnerable countries to climate change. America will be a part of fast-start funding that will ramp up to $10 billion by 2012. And yesterday Secretary Hillary Clinton, my Secretary of State, made it clear that we will engage in a global effort to mobilize $100 billion in financing by 2020, if—and only if—it is part of a broader accord that I have just described.

Mitigation, transparency, financing, it's a clear formula, one that embraces the principle of common but differentiated responses and respective capabilities. And it adds up to a significant accord, one that takes us farther than we have ever gone before as an international community.

I just want to say to this plenary session that we are running short on time. And at this point, the question is whether we will move forward together or split apart, whether we prefer posturing to action. I'm sure that many consider this an imperfect framework that I just described. No country will get everything that it wants. There are those developing countries that want aid with no strings attached and no obligations with respect to transparency. They think that the most advanced nations should pay a higher price. I understand that. There are those advanced nations who think that developing countries either cannot absorb this assistance, or that will not be held accountable effectively, and that the world's fastest growing emitters should bear a greater share of the burden.

We know the fault lines because we've been imprisoned by them for years. These international discussions have essentially taken place now for almost two decades, and we have very

little to show for it other than an increased acceleration of the climate change phenomenon. The time for talk is over. This is the bottom line: We can embrace this accord, take a substantial step forward, continue to refine it and build upon its foundation. We can do that, and everyone who is in this room will be part of a historic endeavor, one that makes life better for our children and our grandchildren.

Or we can choose delay, falling back into the same divisions that have stood in the way of action for years. And we will be back having the same stale arguments month after month, year after year, perhaps decade after decade, all while the danger of climate change grows until it is irreversible.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is no time to waste. America has made our choice. We have charted our course. We have made our commitments. We will do what we say. Now I believe it's the time for the nations and the people of the world to come together behind a common purpose.

We are ready to get this done today, but there has to be movement on all sides to recognize that it is better for us to act than to talk; it's better for us to choose action over inaction, the future over the past. And with courage and faith, I believe that we can meet our responsibilities to our people and the future of our planet. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:32 p.m. at the Bella Center.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia in Copenhagen
December 18, 2009

President Obama. Obviously, our main concern in coming to Copenhagen was to try to move forward with an accord on the issue of climate change. But on the margins of this meeting we thought it was important to continue to build on the excellent relationship that our two Governments have developed over the last several months.

Our main focus today was the START Treaty, the new START Treaty that we have been negotiating. We've been making excellent progress. We are quite close to an agreement, and I'm confident that it will be completed in a timely fashion. And I just want to thank President Medvedev for being a very effective partner in these negotiations.

And we wish him a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

President Medvedev. For my part, as an effective partner of President Obama, I will say all the same, but using different words, as the custom that we have in our diplomatic practice.

That's true that we arrived in Copenhagen not to have this bilateral meeting, but to move forward all the whole range of climate issues, and in this respect our work is not over. But on the other hand, it would be unreasonable not to use this opportunity in order to—not to discuss what we've been doing for the recent days or the recent time in a very coordinated and persistent manner. And I would like to thank Mr. Obama and the U.S. negotiating team. I am talking about a new treaty on the reductions of strategic arms.

And our positions are very close and almost all the issues that we've been discussing for the last month are almost closed. And there are certain technical details which we can encounter, many agreements which require further work. I hope that we will be able to do it in a quite brief period of time. The outcome of our efforts will reflect good and close spirit of our relationship that we have established with the new U.S. administration.

[*At this point, President Medvedev continued in English.*]

And I would like to say merry Christmas and happy New Year to you.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:35 p.m. at the Bella Center. President Medvedev spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Observance of the Hmong New Year
December 18, 2009

Michelle and I extend our warmest wishes to those who are celebrating the Hmong New Year. Over the course of decades, Hmong have come to this country in times of great difficulty, often as refugees escaping persecution. In Southeast Asia, many helped the people of the United States and emigrated here in a period of great strife. Through struggle and sacrifice, they built communities and families and have reminded us of what is best about America. Hmong men and women have come to this country to build a better life, and through their culture and contribution, they have enriched America as well.

The Hmong New Year is traditionally celebrated at the end of the harvest season and marks a time filled with great food, colorful clothes, the music of the *qeej,* and enjoyable games. It is a time for family and community as people gather to bring good luck for the New Year. With that spirit in mind, I wish those celebrating Hmong New Year a prosperous and healthy New Year. *Xyoo tshiab*.

The President's News Conference in Copenhagen
December 18, 2009

The President. Let me start with a statement, and then I'll take a couple of questions.

Today we've made meaningful and unprecedented—made a meaningful and unprecedented breakthrough here in Copenhagen. For the first time in history, all major economies have come together to accept their responsibility to take action to confront the threat of climate change.

Now let me first recount what our approach was throughout the year and coming into this conference. To begin with, we've reaffirmed America's commitment to transform our energy economy at home. We've made historic investments in renewable energy that have already put people back to work. We've raised our fuel efficiency standards, and we have renewed American leadership in international climate negotiations.

Most importantly, we remain committed to comprehensive legislation that will create millions of new American jobs, power new industry, and enhance our national security by reducing our dependence on foreign oil.

That effort at home serves as a foundation for our leadership around the world. Because of the actions we're taking, we came here to Copenhagen with an ambitious target to reduce our emissions. We agreed to join an international effort to provide financing to help developing countries, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable, adapt to climate change, and we reaffirmed the necessity of listing our national actions and commitments in a transparent way.

And these three components, transparency, mitigation, and finance, form the basis of the common approach that the United States and our partners embraced here in Copenhagen. Throughout the day, we worked with many countries to establish a new consensus around these three points, a consensus that will serve as a foundation for global action to confront the threat of climate change for years to come.

Now, this success would have not been possible without the hard work of many countries and many leaders. And I have to add that because of weather constraints in Washington, I am leaving before the final vote, but we feel confident that we are moving in the direction of a significant accord.

In addition to our close allies who did so much to advance this effort, I worked

throughout the day with Prime Minister Meles of Ethiopia, who was representing Africa, as well as Premier Wen of China, Prime Minister Singh of India, President Lula of Brazil, and President Zuma of South Africa to achieve what I believe will be an important milestone.

Earlier this evening, I had a meeting with the last four leaders I mentioned, from China, India, Brazil, and South Africa, and that's where we agreed to list our national actions and commitments, to provide information on the implementation of these actions through national communications, with international consultations and analysis under clearly defined guidelines. We agreed to set a mitigation target to limit warming to no more than 2 degrees Celsius and, importantly, to take action to meet this objective consistent with science. Taken together, these actions will help us begin to meet our responsibilities to leave our children and our grandchildren a cleaner and safer planet.

Now, this progress did not come easily, and we know that this progress alone is not enough. Going forward, we're going to have to build on the momentum that we've established here in Copenhagen to ensure that international action to significantly reduce emissions is sustained and sufficient over time. We've come a long way, but we have much further to go.

To continue moving forward, we must draw on the effort that allowed us to succeed here today, engagement among nations that represent a baseline of mutual interest and mutual respect. Climate change threatens us all; therefore, we must bridge old divides and build new partnerships to meet this great challenge of our time. That's what we've begun to do here today.

For energy holds out not just the perils of a warming climate, but also the promise of a more peaceful and prosperous tomorrow. If America leads in developing clean energy, we will lead in growing our economy, in putting our people back to work, and in leaving a stronger and more secure country to our children.

And around the world, energy is an issue that demands our leadership. The time has come for us to get off the sidelines and to shape the future that we seek. That's why I came to Copenhagen today, and that's why I'm committed to working in common effort with countries from around the globe. That's also why I believe what we have achieved in Copenhagen will not be the end but rather the beginning, the beginning of a new era of international action.

So with that, let me just take a couple of questions, and I'm going to start with Jeff Mason [Reuters].

Climate Change Agreement/Emissions Targets

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Can you give a little bit more detail about how the transparency issue will work, how countries will show or prove that they're doing what they say they'll do on emissions curbs? And can you speak also more specifically about cutting emissions? There's no mention of that in your statement or in what we've heard so far, specifically about the agreement.

The President. Well, on the second question first, the way this agreement is structured, each nation will be putting concrete commitments into an appendix to the document, and so will lay out very specifically what each country's intentions are.

Those commitments will then be subject to a international consultation and analysis, similar to, for example, what takes place when the WTO is examining progress or lack of progress that countries are making on various commitments. It will not be legally binding, but what it will do is allow for each country to show to the world what they're doing, and there will be a sense on the part of each country that we're in this together, and we'll know who is meeting and who's not meeting the mutual obligations that have been set forth.

With respect to the emissions targets that are going to be set, we know that they will not be by themselves sufficient to get to where we need to get by 2050. So that's why I say that this is going to be a first step. And there are going to be those who are going to look at the national commitments, tally them up, and say, you know, the science dictates that even more needs to be done. The challenge here was that

for a lot of countries, particularly those emerging countries that are still in different stages of development, this is going to be the first time in which even voluntarily they offered up mitigation targets. And I think that it was important to essentially get that shift in orientation moving. That's what I think will end up being most significant about this accord.

From the perspective of the United States, I've set forth goals that are reflected in legislation that came out of the House, that are being discussed on a bipartisan basis in the Senate. And although we will not be legally bound by anything that took place here today, we will, I think, have reaffirmed our commitment to meet those targets. And we're going to meet those targets, as I said before, not simply because the science demands it, but also because I think it offers us enormous economic opportunity down the road. Okay?

Climate Change Agreement Monitoring

Q. And the first part of the question was about the transparency issue—[*inaudible*].

The President. Well, as I said, there is a specific——

Q. The annex.

The President. Exactly. There is the annexing combined with a process where, essentially, they are presenting to the world, subject to international consultation and then analysis, exactly what are these steps. So if I make a claim that I'm reducing greenhouse gases because I've changed mileage standards on cars, there will be a process whereby people will be able to take a look and say, is that, in fact, in effect? Okay?

Jennifer Loven [Associated Press].

Climate Change Agreement

Q. Thank you, sir. You've talked to, in your remarks earlier today, about other nations needing to accept less than perfect in their view. Can you talk about what you gave up and where you might have shifted the U.S. position to get to this point? And also, if this was so hard to get to, just what you have today, how do you feel confident about getting to a legally binding agreement in a year?

The President. I think it is going to be very hard, and it's going to take some time. Let me sort of provide the context for what I saw when I arrived.

And I think it's important to be able to stand in the shoes of all the different parties involved here. In some ways, the United States was coming with a somewhat clean slate, because we had been on the sidelines in many of these negotiations over several years.

Essentially, you have a situation where the Kyoto Protocol and some of the subsequent accords called on the developed countries who were signatories to engage in some significant mitigation actions and also to help developing countries. And there were very few, if any, obligations on the part of the developing countries.

Now, in some cases, for countries that are extremely poor, still agrarian and so forth, they're just not significant contributors to greenhouse gases. But what's happened, obviously, since 1992 is that you've got emerging countries like China and India and Brazil that have seen enormous economic growth and industrialization. So we know that moving forward, it's going to be necessary if we're going to meet those targets for some changes to take place among those countries. It's not enough just for the developed countries to make changes. Those countries are going to have to make some changes as well, not at the same pace, not in the same way, but they're going to have to do something to assure that whatever carbon we're taking out of the environment is not just simply dumped in by other parties.

On the other hand, from the perspective of the developing countries like China and India, they're saying to themselves, per capita our carbon footprint remains very small, and we have hundreds of millions of people who don't even have electricity yet, so for us to get bound by a set of legal obligations could potentially curtail our ability to develop, and that's not fair.

So I think that you have a fundamental deadlock in perspectives that were brought to the discussions during the course of this week. And both sides have legitimate points.

My view was that if we could begin to acknowledge that the emerging countries are going to have some responsibilities, but that those

responsibilities are not exactly the same as the developed countries, and if we could set up a financing mechanism to help those countries that are most vulnerable, like Bangladesh, then we would be at least starting to reorient ourselves in a way that allows us to be effective in the future.

But it is still going to require more work and more confidence building and greater trust between emerging countries, the least developed countries, and the developed countries before I think you are going to see another legally binding treaty signed.

I actually think that it's necessary for us, ultimately, to get to such a treaty, and I am supportive of such efforts. But this is a classic example of a situation where if we just waited for that, then we would not make any progress. And in fact, I think there might be such frustration and cynicism that rather than taking one step forward, we ended up taking two steps back.

But I want to be very clear that, ultimately, this issue is going to be dictated by the science, and the science indicates that we're going to have to take more aggressive steps in the future. Our hope is that by investing in clean energy, in research, in development, in innovation, that in the same way that the Clean Air Act ended up spurring all kinds of innovations that solved the acid rain problem at a much cheaper and much more rapid pace than we expected, that by beginning to make progress and getting the wheels of innovation moving, that we are in fact going to be in a position to solve this problem.

But we're going to need technological breakthroughs to get to the goals that we're looking for. In the meantime, we've got to be able to take the steps that are in our grasp right now, like, for example, energy efficiency, something I emphasized last week.

All right. Helene Cooper [New York Times].

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. I'm sorry.

Climate Change Agreement Compromises

Q. [*Inaudible*]—what about the compromise shift question?

The President. I have to say that quietly we did some pretty good groundwork during the course of this year, so that our position was relatively clear. I think that the one principle that I brought to this is that whatever commitments we make, I want to be able to be sure that they're actually commitments that we can keep. So we tried to be modest in what we thought we could accomplish. I think there was interest on the part of some to, for example, increase our mitigation targets. Although when you look out in the years 2025 or 2030, our goals are actually entirely comparable with Europe's. On the front end, they appear to be less, because frankly, they've had a head start over the last several years in doing things like energy efficiency that we care about.

What I said to the other people in the room is, is that I want to make sure that whatever it is that we promise we can actually deliver on and that it would be unrealistic for us to think that we can turn on a dime and that suddenly a clean energy economy is going to emerge overnight, given the fact that it's going to require significant effort. And companies and industries are going to be wanting to make changes; we're already seeing those changes, but they haven't all borne fruit yet. And we want to make sure that we're not getting too far ahead of ourselves in terms of targets, even as I understand that the science compels us to move as rapidly as we can.

All right. Helene Cooper.

Climate Change Agreement Monitoring/Cap and Trade

Q. Thank you. I wanted to ask you about this listing of the appendix—in the appendix.

The President. Right.

Q. Going forward, do you think that's going to continue to be sufficient, or do you think verification is going to remain a source of friction between the U.S. and China? And also, on cap and trade, are you able to—were you able to assure the leaders here that you'll make this—that a legislative priority next year? Thank you.

The President. With respect to the appendix, these countries have set forth, for the first time, some very significant mitigation efforts,

and I want to give them credit for that. I mean, if you look at a country like India, as I said, they've got hundreds of millions of people who don't have electricity, hundreds of millions of people who by any standard are still living in dire poverty. For them even voluntarily to say, we are going to reduce carbon emissions relative to our current ways of doing business by X percent, is an important step. And we applaud them for that.

The problem actually is not going to be verification in the sense that this international consultation and analysis mechanism will actually tell us a lot of what we need to know. And the truth is that we can actually monitor a lot of what takes place through satellite imagery and so forth. So I think we're going to have a pretty good sense of what countries are doing.

What I think that some people are going to legitimately ask is, well, if it's not legally binding, what prevents us from, 10 years from now, looking and saying, you know, everybody fell short of these goals, and there's no consequences to it? My response is that, A, that's why I think we should still drive towards something that is more binding than it is. But that was not achievable at this conference.

The point—and the second point that I'd make is that Kyoto was legally binding and everybody still fell short anyway. And so I think that it's important for us, instead of setting up a bunch of goals that end up just being words on a page and are not met, that we get moving, everybody is taking as aggressive a set of actions as they can; that there is a sense of mutual obligation and information sharing so that people can see who's serious and who's not; that we strive for more binding agreements over time; and that we just keep moving forward. That's been the main goal that I tried to pursue today.

And I think that as people step back, I guarantee you there are going to be a lot of people who immediately say, the science says you got to do X, Y, Z; in the absence of some sort of legal enforcement, it's not going to happen. Well, we don't have international government, and even treaties, as we saw in Kyoto, are only as strong as the countries' commitments to participate.

Because of the differing views between developing countries and developed countries, in terms of future obligations, the most important thing I think we can do at this point—and that we began to accomplish but are not finished with—is to build some trust between the developing and the developed countries to break down some of the logjams that have to do with people looking backwards and saying, well, Kyoto said this, or Bali said that, or you guys need to do something, but we don't need to do something, or—getting out of that mindset and moving towards a position where everybody recognizes we all have to move together. If we start from that position, then I think we're going to be able to make progress in the future.

But this is going to be hard. This is hard within countries; it's going to be even harder between countries. And one of the things that I've felt very strongly about during the course of this year is that hard stuff requires not paralysis, but it requires going ahead and making the best of the situation that you're in at this point and then continually trying to improve and make progress from there. Okay?

Thank you very much everybody. We'll see some of you on the plane.

Climate Change Agreement

Q. Mr. President, who will sign the agreement? Since you're leaving, who here has the power to sign it?

The President. Well, the—we've got our negotiators who are here. I'm not going to be the only leader who, I think, leaves before it's finally presented, but they are empowered to sign off, given at this point that most of the text has been completely worked out.

Q. Does it require signing? Is it that kind of agreement?

The President. You know, it raises an interesting question as to whether technically there's actually a signature, since, as I said, it's not a legally binding agreement. I don't know what the protocols are. But I do think that this is a commitment that we, as the United States, are making and that we think is very important.

All right. Thanks, guys.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:30 p.m. at the Bella Center. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this news conference.

The President's Weekly Address
December 19, 2009

Over the past few decades, there has been an intense struggle in Washington between the lobbyists for the insurance industry and the interests of the American people over what's been called a patient's bill of rights, a set of rules to protect Americans from some of the worst practices of the health insurance industry, rules to ensure that all Americans are getting the care they need from their doctors and the care they deserve from their insurance companies.

The last time a patient's bill of rights was within reach was roughly a decade ago, and it was supported by Democrats and Republicans alike, from Ted Kennedy to John McCain. It included the right to an appeals process so you could challenge an unfair decision by an insurance company before a third party. It included the right to choose your own doctor. It included the right to access information about what your health insurance plan means for you, and it called for a new level of transparency so that patients would know if their doctor had a conflict of interest when providing services.

Now, this patient's bill of rights never made it into law. It fell victim, again and again, to the same special interest lobbying that has blocked passage of health insurance reform for so many decades. But today, we are being given another chance to make it a reality, because each of these rights, and many more, are incorporated in the health insurance reform bill that recently passed the House of Representatives and in the bill that is currently making its way through the Senate.

Both the House and the Senate bills would make it against the law for insurance companies to deny you coverage on the basis of a preexisting condition or illness. Both would stop insurers from charging exorbitant premiums on the basis of age, health, or gender. Both would prevent insurance companies from dropping your coverage when you get sick, and both would put a limit on how much you have to pay out of pocket for the treatments you need in a year or a lifetime.

Simply put, the protections currently included in both the health insurance reform bill passed by the House and the version currently on the Senate floor would represent the toughest measures we've ever taken to hold the insurance industry accountable. Anyone who says otherwise simply hasn't read the bills. Just open these proposals at random and you'll find on almost any page patient protections that dwarf any of those passed by Congress in at least a decade.

These protections are just one part of a landmark reform that will finally reduce the cost of health care. When it becomes law, families will save on their premiums. Small businesses and Americans who don't get any insurance today through their employers will no longer be forced to pay punishingly high rates to get coverage. This legislation will also strengthen Medicare and extend the life of the program, while saving senior citizens hundreds of dollars a year in prescription costs. And reforms to target waste, inefficiency, and price gouging by the insurance industry will help make this the largest deficit reduction plan in over a decade.

The insurance industry knows all this. That's why they're at it again, using their muscle in Washington to try to block a vote that they know they will lose. They're lobbying; they're running ads; they're spending millions of dollars to kill health insurance reform, just like they've done so many times before. They want to preserve a system that works better for the insurance industry than it does for the American people.

But now, for the first time, there is a clear majority in the Senate that's willing to stand up to the insurance lobby and embrace lasting health insurance reforms that have eluded us for generations. The question is whether the minority that opposes these reforms will

continue to use parliamentary maneuvers to try and stop the Senate from voting on them.

Whatever their position on health insurance reform, Senators ought to allow an up-or-down vote. Let's bring this long and vigorous debate to an end. Let's deliver on the promise of health insurance reforms that will make our people healthier, our economy stronger, and our future more secure. And as this difficult year comes to a close, let's show the American people that we are equal to the task of meeting our great challenges.

Thanks for listening, and on behalf of Michelle, Malia, Sasha, and Bo, happy holidays from our family to yours.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:40 p.m. on December 17 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on December 19. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 18, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on December 19. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on Health Care Reform and Climate Change
December 19, 2009

Hello. Good afternoon, everybody. You know that I am from Chicago, so let me first say that with the place where I live covered with snow, I'm finally starting to feel like home. And I am sorry to drag you guys out in this weather, but I wanted to speak briefly to you about the significant progress that we've made on two of the major challenges facing the American people: the crushing costs of health care and our dangerous dependence on fossil fuels.

On health care, with today's developments, it now appears that the American people will have the vote they deserve on genuine reform that offers security to those who have health insurance and affordable options for those who do not. And so I want to thank Senator Harry Reid and every Senator who's been working around the clock to make this happen.

There's still much work left to be done, but not a lot of time left to do it. But today is a major step forward for the American people. After a nearly century-long struggle, we are on the cusp of making health care reform a reality in the United States of America.

As with any legislation, compromise is part of the process. But I'm pleased that recently added amendments have made this landmark bill even stronger. Between the time the bill passes and the time when the insurance exchange gets up and running, there will now be penalties for insurance companies that arbitrarily jack up rates on consumers. And while insurance companies will be prevented from denying coverage on the basis of preexisting conditions once the exchange is open, in the meantime, there will be a high risk pool where people with preexisting conditions can purchase affordable coverage.

And a recent amendment has made these protections even stronger. Insurance companies will now be prohibited from denying coverage to children immediately after this bill passes. There's also explicit language in this bill that will protect a patient's choice of doctor. And small businesses will get additional assistance as well.

Now, these protections are in addition to the ones we've been talking about for some time. No longer will insurance companies be able to drop your coverage if you become sick, and no longer will you have to pay unlimited amounts out of your own pocket for treatments that you need.

Under this bill, family will save on their premiums, businesses that will see their costs rise if we don't act will save money now and in the future. This bill will strengthen Medicare and extend the life of the program. Because it's paid for and gets rid of waste and inefficiency in our health care system, this will be the largest deficit reduction plan in over a decade. In fact, we just learned from the Congressional Budget Office that this bill will reduce our deficit by $132 billion over the first decade of the program and more than $1 trillion in the decade after that. Finally, this reform will make coverage

affordable for over 30 million Americans who don't have it—over 30 million Americans.

As I said before, these are not small changes. These are big changes. They're fundamental reforms. They will save money. They will save lives. And I look forward to working with the Senate and the House to finish the work that remains so that we can make this reform a reality for the American people.

I also want to briefly mention the progress we made in Copenhagen yesterday. For the first time in history, all of the major—the world's major economies have come together to accept their responsibility to take action to confront the threat of climate change. After extremely difficult and complex negotiations, this important breakthrough lays the foundation for international action in the years to come.

Now, this progress did not come easily, and we know that progress on this particular aspect of climate change negotiations is not enough. And going forward, we're going to have to build on the momentum that we established in Copenhagen to ensure that international action to significantly reduce emissions is sustained and sufficient over time.

At home that means continuing our efforts to build a clean energy economy that has the potential to create millions of new jobs and new industries, and it means passing legislation that will create the incentives necessary to spark this clean energy revolution.

So even though we have a long way to go, there's no question that we've accomplished a great deal over the last few days. And I want America to continue to lead on this journey, because if America leads in developing clean energy, we will lead in growing our economy and putting our people back to work and leaving a stronger and more secure country to our children. That's why I went to Copenhagen yesterday, and that's why I will continue in these efforts in the weeks and months to come.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:42 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on Presenting the Securing Americans Value and Efficiency Award
December 21, 2009

Health Care Reform

Hello, everybody. Good morning. Before I begin, I want to say a brief word about the historic vote which took place earlier this morning. The United States Senate knocked down a filibuster aimed at blocking a final vote on health care reform and scored a big victory for the American people. By standing up to the special interests who've prevented reform for decades and who are furiously lobbying against it now, the Senate has moved us closer to reform that makes a tremendous difference for families, for seniors, for businesses, and for the country as a whole.

For those who have insurance, reform will mean greater security and stability. No longer will people with preexisting conditions be excluded from coverage. No longer will people who are seriously ill be dropped from coverage. And no longer will families be allowed to go broke because they're forced to pay exorbitant out-of-pocket expenses.

Many people recall the enormous fights around the patient's bill of rights that never got done. Well, you know what? The patient's bill of rights is embedded in this health care bill and—to make sure that all Americans who have insurance right now are getting a fair deal from their insurance companies.

Small businesses and those who don't get insurance through their employer will finally be able to get insurance at a price that they can afford with tax credits to help. And Medicare will be stronger and its solvency extended by nearly a decade. Seniors will get more assistance with prescription drug costs than they're getting right now. And finally, these reforms

will help the inexorable and unsustainable rise in health care costs that are overwhelming families, businesses, and the Federal budget.

The Congressional Budget Office now reports that this bill will reduce our deficit by $132 billion over the first decade and by as much as $1.3 trillion in the decade after that. So I just want to be clear: For all those who are continually carping about how this is somehow a big spending Government bill, this cuts our deficit by $132 billion the first 10 years and by over a trillion in the second. That argument that opponents are making against this bill does not hold water.

SAVE Award Presentation

Now, embracing this kind of responsibility in Washington is what also brings us here today. I am pleased to be joined this morning by my Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Ric Shinseki; my Budget Director, Peter Orszag; and our special guest, last but not least, the winner of the first annual SAVE Award, and that's Nancy Fichtner of Loma, Colorado.

Now, having met with Nancy a few minutes ago, I can tell you Nancy means business. She is a single working mom; she's a clerk with the VA; she's an artist; she's an outdoorswoman; and she is an avid hunter. In fact, somewhere in the Western United States, there is an elk that is breathing a sigh of relief because Nancy is here instead of where she would have been: hunting with her kids. And I believe her children are here; where's Nancy's kids? There they are right there. It's great to see you guys. Nancy's daughter, she skins and guts her elk—[*laughter*]—so don't mess with her either. [*Laughter*]

We're all here for a simple reason. At a time when we face not only a fiscal crisis but also a host of difficult challenges as a nation, business as usual in Washington just won't cut it. We need a Government that's more efficient, that's more effective, and far more fiscally responsible.

And when my administration walked through the door, the country faced a growing economic downturn as well as a deepening fiscal hole. Washington had passed massive tax cuts for the wealthy and an expensive new entitlement program without paying for any of it. Health care costs continued to rise, year after year. And little effort was made to cut wasteful spending. As a result, over the previous 8 years, the national debt doubled—doubled. In January, the deficit stood at $1.3 trillion, and we had to make the difficult decision to add to the deficit in the short term to prevent the potential collapse of our economy.

But as I've said, in the long run, we can't continue to spend as if deficits don't have consequences, as if waste doesn't matter, as if the hard-earned tax dollars of the American people can be treated like Monopoly money. That's what we've seen time and time again. Washington's become more concerned about the next election than the next generation. It's put off hard choices, spending bill after spending bill, budget after bloated budget.

Government contracting is a perfect example. Between 2002 and 2008, the amount spent on Government contracts more than doubled. And the amount spent on no-bid, noncompetitive contracts jumped by 129 percent. This is an inexcusable waste of money. And that's why, back in March, I ordered Federal departments and agencies to come up with plans to save up to $40 billion a year in contracting by 2011. And over the past 6 months, agencies have been making cuts by looking for better deals, by ending contracts and doing work in house, and by opening up no-bid contracts to competitive bidding. Because of these efforts, I'm proud to announce today that we are on track to meet our goals. Twenty-four departments have identified more than $19 billion in savings for this year alone.

And this is only the latest example. At my very first Cabinet meeting, I directed every Secretary to join us in scouring the budget, line by line, to find ways to make Government more efficient and less wasteful. Together, we identified more than 100 programs to scale back or end completely, as well as other ways to cut costs, finding $17 billion in savings so far.

We're also going after roughly $100 billion wasted on improper payments to contractors, organizations, and individuals. To put this in perspective, these mistakes, and in some cases abuses, cost taxpayers more each year than the

budgets for the Education and Homeland Security Departments combined.

We've done what some said was impossible: preventing wasteful spending on outdated weapons systems that even the Pentagon says it doesn't need. And I've insisted from the beginning that health care reform will not add one dime to our deficit. And as I just noted, not only is it not adding to our deficit, it's actually reducing it.

And finally, I've issued a challenge to every man and woman who works for the Federal Government: If you see a way that Government can do its job better, or do the same job for less money, I want to know about it. And that's why we started the SAVE Award, to draw on those who know Government best to improve how Government works. We asked Federal employees to submit reform proposals based on their experiences. And in a testament to the seriousness with which these folks are taking their jobs, we received more than 38,000 proposals in just 3 weeks.

From these submissions, four finalists were selected and put to an online vote. Nancy is here because she won. Her idea stems from her experience at the VA Medical Center where she works. She noticed that whenever patients left the hospital, leftover medications like eye drops or inhalers were just thrown away. And often, veterans would have to go right back to the pharmacy to refill what was discarded. So the VA is paying twice. It's waste, plain and simple. And thanks to Nancy and to Secretary Shinseki and the folks at Veterans Affairs, we're putting a stop to it. The change is already underway.

Of course, Nancy's proposal was just one of many great ideas that came to us. We've already begun to implement a host of suggestions made through the SAVE contest. And while promoting electronic paystubs or scheduling Social Security appointments online or repurposing unused Government supplies may not be the most glamorous reforms in history, when taken together, these small changes add up; they add up to a transformation of how Government works.

And that's why we're going to turn the SAVE Award into an annual event. That's why we're holding a forum at the White House next month to seek more ideas from the private sector, specifically about how we can better use technology to reform our Government for the 21st century.

After years of irresponsibility, we are once again taking responsibility for every dollar we spend, the same way families do. It's true that what I've described today will not be enough to get us out of our fiscal mess by itself. We face a deficit that will take some tough decisions in the next year's budget and in years to come to get under control. But these changes will save the American people billions of dollars. And they'll help to put in place a Government that's more efficient and effective, that wastes less money on no-bid contracts, that's cutting bureaucracy and harnessing technology, that's more fiscally responsible, and that better serve the American taxpayer. That's the Government we need. That's the Government I intend to implement. That's the kind of Government that the American people deserve. And that's the kind of Government that people like Nancy are helping to build each and every day.

So, Nancy, congratulations. We're proud of you. Thank you so much. Thank you. We're very proud of your mom. [*Laughter*] That's great.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:21 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House.

Remarks at the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Washington
December 21, 2009

The President. I think one thing that's important to remember is that even though there's a lot of fun at Christmas, you know, you got—especially when it's snowy like this—the—so it's pretty outside—you got the Christmas tree, you got the Christmas cookies,

you've got presents. You know, I think that the most important thing is just to remember why we celebrate Christmas, which is——

Child. I know.

The President. Do you know?

Child. The birth of baby Jesus.

The President. The birth of baby Jesus, and the—and what he symbolizes for people all around the world is the possibility of peace and people treating each other with respect. And so I just hope that spirit of giving that's so important at Christmas, I hope all of you guys remember that as well. You know, it's not just about getting a gift, but it's also doing something for other people.

Child. I know.

The President. So being nice to your mom and dad and grandma and aunties and showing respect to people, that's really important too, that's part of the Christmas spirit, don't you think? Do you agree with me?

Children. Yes.

The President. You do? Do you have an interesting observation?

Child. I know why we give gifts to other people.

The President. Why is that?

Child. Because the three wise men gave gifts to baby Jesus.

The President. That's exactly right. But the three wise men—the reason——

[*At this point, a sign fell off the wall.*]

The President. ——uh-oh, I thought that was the cookies going down.

Child. Oh, no, we can't have that.

The President. We couldn't have that.

You know, the three wise men—if you think about it, here are these guys, they have all this money, they've got all this wealth and power, and yet they took a long trip to a manger just to see a little baby. And it just shows you that just because you're powerful or you're wealthy, that's not what's important. What's important is what's—the kind of spirit you have.

So I hope everybody has a spirit of kindness and thoughtfulness, and everybody is really thinking about how can they do for other people—treating them well, because that's really the spirit of Christmas.

Does everybody agree with that?

Children. Yes!

The President. I agree with that. Well, you guys all seem like really sharp, sharp young people. And I'm very proud of you. And let me just ask you one last question. Is everybody here working pretty hard in school?

Children. Yes!

The President. Okay, because the thing that I want everybody to remember—the most important message I can leave is, is that you guys are—have so much potential. One of you could end up being President some day. But it's only going to happen if you stay focused and you work hard in school. And you guys, there's nothing wrong with having fun and fooling around and playing sports and listening to rap music and all that stuff. But I want you guys to read and hit the books and do your math, because that's really what's going to determine how you do in the future. All right? That's the most important thing you can do.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:49 p.m. at Richard England Clubhouse #14.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Community Lenders and an Exchange With Reporters

December 22, 2009

The President. All right, everybody. Well, it's good to see all of you. I just concluded a meeting with 12 regional community banks to have the same conversation that I had with some of the larger banks last week and that I've been having with CEOs and companies across the country over the last year, and that is, how do we continue to consolidate the gains we've made during the course of this year in terms of economic recovery, but most importantly, how do we move forward over the next year so that businesses are getting the capital that they need

and that we are starting to see people hired again, people able to finance their homes, finance college educations, and so forth.

Community banks serve a vital function all across the country. And they are folks who know their customers, don't just lend them money but also provide them advice if they're entrepreneurs and getting started. They are intimately woven into the fabric of the community. I think it's fair to say that most of these community banks were not engaged in some of the hugely risky activities that helped to precipitate the financial crisis. At the same time, they continue to try to do their best in their local and regional markets to make sure that businesses who are now being affected by the overall recession are able to pick themselves back up.

What I did was to go around the room and to hear from each of them. Not all these communities are the same. We've got everything from Kalamazoo to Harlem to small communities in Arkansas that focus mostly on farm loans.

There were some general themes that were out there. One, that there are businesses that are looking for loans out there that are profitable, that are ready to make money. And the key is to match them up with banks that are in a position to lend. There are some banks that have seen the increase in the savings rate and higher deposits give them a pretty good capital base, but they're still constrained by some regulatory restraints.

We are looking to see if there are possibilities to cut some of the redtape. We don't have direct influence over our independent regulators, but we think that the more that we can highlight that in some ways, the pendulum may have swung too far in the direction of not lending after a decade in which it had gone way too far in the direction of getting money out the door no matter the risk; that if we can get that balance right, that there are businesses and communities out there that are ready to grow again. And we just need to help make that happen.

I also had a discussion with all these bankers about the prospects for financial regulatory reform. As I said, many of the issues when it comes to large systemic banks and what precipitated the crisis on Wall Street don't apply to these smaller banks. Most of them are very supportive of the idea of financial regulatory reform. I think, fairly, they just want to make sure that as we regulate better, that that doesn't automatically mean that we're just loading them up with more paperwork and more burdens. And I think we do have an obligation to make sure that the regulatory schemes that we come up with are more streamlined and more efficient and are sending clear signals to the banks involved.

I did emphasize to them that community banks do have a responsibility to their customers and that many of the consumer protections and efforts to make our—to create a single consumer financial protection agency would apply to them. And we think that's important, because every bank, large and small, is providing credit cards and providing debit cards and providing mortgage loans. And we think that the more we are making sure that banks aren't competing by how obscure their fine print is, but rather competing on the basis of the quality of their service and the terms of their loans, the better off consumers are going to be, and ultimately, the better off banks are going to be as well.

So I very much appreciate them all coming in. I think the main message that I want everybody to take away—and certainly, this is the message that I took away from the conversations here—is that there remains enormous opportunities as we come out of this recession for businesses to start growing again and to start hiring again. And everything that we're going to be doing here in the White House over the next several months is going to be geared towards catalyzing and spurring additional lending, particularly to small businesses, because we feel very optimistic that the worst is behind us and that now is the time for us to seize opportunities.

With that, I want to wish everybody—if I don't see you guys before Christmas—a happy Christmas and a—a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

All right. Thank you, guys.

The President's Holiday Travel to Hawaii

Q. When do you think you'll leave?

The President. Well, I will not leave until my friends in the Senate have completed their work. My attitude is, is that if they're making these sacrifices to provide health care to all Americans, then the least I can do is to be around and to provide them any encouragement and last-minute help if necessary.

All right. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:52 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Statement on the Death of Ann Nixon Cooper
December 22, 2009

Michelle and I wish to express our deepest condolences on the passing of Mrs. Ann Nixon Cooper. From her beginnings in Shelbyville and Nashville, Tennessee, to her many years as a pillar of the Atlanta community, Ann lived a life of service. Whether it was helping to found the Girls Club for African American Youth, serving on the board of directors for the Gate City Nursery, working as a tutor at Ebenezer Baptist Church, or registering voters, Ann had a broad and lasting impact on her community. I also understand that as a wife, mother, and grandmother, Ann was a source of strength for her entire family and that she always put them first.

Over the course of her extraordinary 107 years, Ann saw both the brightest lights of our Nation's history and some of its darkest hours as well. It is especially meaningful for me that she lived to cast a vote on election day 2008, and it was a deep honor for me to mark her life in the speech I delivered that night. It was a life that captured the spirit of community and change and progress that is at the heart of the American experience, a life that inspired and will continue to inspire me in the years to come.

During this time of sadness, Michelle and I offer our deepest condolences to all who loved Ann Nixon Cooper. But even as we mourn her loss, we will also be rejoicing in all that she meant for her family, her community, and so many Americans.

Remarks on Senate Passage of Health Care Reform Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters
December 24, 2009

The President. Good morning, everybody. In a historic vote that took place this morning, Members of the Senate joined their colleagues in the House of Representatives to pass a landmark health insurance reform package, legislation that brings us toward the end of a nearly century-long struggle to reform America's health care system.

Ever since Teddy Roosevelt first called for reform in 1912, seven Presidents—Democrats and Republicans alike—have taken up the cause of reform. Time and time again, such efforts have been blocked by special interest lobbyists who've perpetuated a status quo that works better for the insurance industry than it does for the American people. But with passage of reform bills in both the House and the Senate, we are now finally poised to deliver on the promise of real, meaningful health insurance reform that will bring additional security and stability to the American people.

The reform bill that passed the Senate this morning, like the House bill, includes the toughest measures ever taken to hold the insurance industry accountable. Insurance companies will no longer be able to deny you coverage on the basis of a preexisting condition. They will no longer be able to drop your coverage when you get sick. No longer will you have to pay unlimited amounts out of your own pocket for the

treatments you need. And you'll be able to appeal unfair decisions by insurance companies to an independent party.

If this legislation becomes law, workers won't have to worry about losing coverage if they lose or change jobs, families will save on their premiums, businesses that would see their costs rise if we do not act will save money now, and they will save money in the future. This bill will strengthen Medicare and extend the life of the program. It will make coverage affordable for over 30 million Americans who do not have it—30 million Americans. And because it is paid for and curbs the waste and inefficiency in our health care system, this bill will help reduce our deficit by as much as $1.3 trillion in the coming decades, making it the largest deficit reduction plan in over a decade.

As I've said before, these are not small reforms, these are big reforms. If passed, this will be the most important piece of social legislation since the Social Security Act in the 1930s and the most important reform of our health care system since Medicare passed in the 1960s. And what makes it so important is not just its cost savings or its deficit reductions. It's the impact reform will have on Americans who no longer have to go without a checkup or prescriptions that they need because they can't afford them, on families who no longer have to worry that a single illness will send them into financial ruin, and on businesses that will no longer face exorbitant insurance rates that hamper their competitiveness. It's the difference reform will make in the lives of the American people.

I want to commend Senator Harry Reid, extraordinary work that he did; Speaker Pelosi for her extraordinary leadership and dedication. Having passed reform bills in both the House and the Senate, we now have to take up the last and most important step and reach an agreement on a final reform bill that I can sign into law. And I look forward to working with Members of Congress in both Chambers over the coming weeks to do exactly that.

With today's vote, we are now incredibly close to making health insurance reform a reality in this country. Our challenge then is to finish the job. We can't doom another generation of Americans to soaring costs and eroding coverage and exploding deficits. Instead, we need to do what we were sent here to do and improve the lives of the people we serve. For the sake of our citizens, our economy, and our future, let's make 2010 the year we finally reform health care in the United States of America.

Everybody, merry Christmas, happy New Year.

The President's Message to U.S. Military Personnel

Q. Do you have a holiday wish for the troops?

The President. I do, and I will be actually—I'm on my way right now to call a few of them and wish them merry Christmas and to thank them for their extraordinary service as they're posted in Iraq and Afghanistan.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:47 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.R. 3590. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

The President's Weekly Address
December 24, 2009

The President. Hello, everyone, and merry Christmas. As you and your families gather to celebrate the holidays, we want to take a moment to send greetings from our family: from me, from Michelle, from Malia, Sasha, and from Bo.

The First Lady. This is our first Christmas in the White House, and we are so grateful for this extraordinary experience. Not far from here, in the Blue Room, is the official White House Christmas tree. It's an 18-foot tall Douglas-fir from West Virginia, and it's

decorated with hundreds of ornaments designed by people and children from all over the country. Each one is a reminder of the traditions we cherish as Americans and the blessings we're thankful for this holiday season.

The President. That's right, especially as we continue to recover from an extraordinary recession that still has so many Americans hurting: parents without a job who struggled to put presents under the Christmas tree; families and neighbors who've seen their homes foreclosed; and folks wondering what the new year will bring.

But even in these tough times, there's still so much to celebrate this Christmas: a message of peace and brotherhood that continues to inspire more than 2,000 years after Jesus' birth, the love of family and friends, the bonds of community and country, and the character and courage of our men and women in uniform who are far from home for the holidays, away from their families, risking their lives to protect ours.

To all our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coast guardsmen: I have no greater honor than serving as your Commander in Chief. I've been awed by your selfless spirit, your eagerness to serve, at the Naval Academy and West Point. I've been energized by your dedication to duty, from Baghdad to the Korean Peninsula. Michelle and I have been moved by your determination: wounded warriors at Walter Reed and Bethesda fighting to recover, to get back to your units.

And I've been humbled profoundly by patriots who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom, in flag-draped caskets coming home at Dover, in the quiet solitude of Arlington. And after years of multiple tours of duty, as you carry on our missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, your service, your readiness to make that same sacrifice, is an inspiration to us and to every single American.

The First Lady. And so are your families. As First Lady, one of my greatest privileges is to visit with military families across the country. I've met military spouses doing the parenting of two, keeping the household together, juggling play dates and soccer games, helping with homework, doing everything they can to make the kids feel okay even as they try to hide their own fears and worries.

I've met kids who wonder when mom or dad is coming home, grandparents and relatives who step in to care for wounded warriors, and folks trying to carry on after losing the person they loved most in the world. And through it all, these families somehow still find the time and the energy to serve their communities as well, coaching Little League, running the PTA, raising money to help those less fortunate than they are, and more.

But even these strong military families can use a hand, especially during the holidays. If you live near a military base, you can reach out through your workplaces, your schools, your churches. There are so many ways to help, with childcare, with errands, or just by bringing over a home-cooked meal. Even if you don't know a military family nearby, your family can still help by donating or volunteering at organizations that support military families.

The President. You can also reach out directly to our forces around the world. Kids can make a card that will bring a smile to an American far from home. Adults can send a care package or a prepaid phone card that makes the tour just a little bit easier. Every American can do something to support our troops, even if it's as simple as just saying thank you. For more ways to let our troops know you care, go to www.whitehouse.gov.

So to all our men and women in uniform spending the holidays far away from home, whether it's at a base here in the States, a mess hall in Iraq, or a remote outpost in Afghanistan, know that you are in our thoughts and in our prayers. And this holiday season—and every holiday season—know that we are doing everything in our power to make sure you can succeed in your missions and come home safe to your families.

The First Lady. And to all Americans, from our family to yours, merry Christmas.

The President. Merry Christmas, everybody.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:05 p.m. on December 22 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for broadcast on December 26. The transcript was

made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 24, but was embargoed for release until 6 p.m. on December 24. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Death of Percy Sutton
December 27, 2009

Percy Sutton was a true hero to African Americans in New York City and around the country. We will remember him for his service to the country as a Tuskegee airman, to New York State as a State assemblyman, to New York City as Manhattan borough president, and to the community of Harlem in leading the effort to revitalize the world renowned Apollo Theater. His life-long dedication to the fight for civil rights and his career as an entrepreneur and public servant made the rise of countless young African Americans possible.

Michelle and I extend our deepest condolences to his family on this sad day.

Remarks in Kaneohe, Hawaii
December 28, 2009

Attempted Terrorist Act on Northwest Airlines Flight 253

Hey, guys. Good morning, everybody. I want to take just a few minutes to update the American people on the attempted terrorist attack that occurred on Christmas Day and the steps we're taking to ensure the safety and security of the country.

The investigation's ongoing, and I spoke again this morning with Attorney General Eric Holder, the Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, and my Counterterrorism and Homeland Security Adviser, John Brennan. I asked them to keep—continue monitoring the situation, to keep the American people and Members of Congress informed.

Here's what we know so far. On Christmas Day, Northwest Airlines Flight 253 was en route from Amsterdam, Netherlands, to Detroit. As the plane made its final approach to Detroit Metropolitan Airport, a passenger allegedly tried to ignite an explosive device on his body, setting off a fire.

Thanks to the quick and heroic actions of passengers and crew, the suspect was immediately subdued, the fire was put out, and the plane landed safely. The suspect is now in custody and has been charged with attempting to destroy an aircraft. And a full investigation has been launched into this attempted act of terrorism, and we will not rest until we find all who were involved and hold them accountable.

Now, this was a serious reminder of the dangers that we face and the nature of those who threaten our homeland. Had the suspect succeeded in bringing down that plane, it could have killed nearly 300 passengers and crew, innocent civilians preparing to celebrate the holidays with their families and friends.

The American people should be assured that we are doing everything in our power to keep you and your families safe and secure during this busy holiday season. Since I was first notified of this incident, I've ordered the following actions to be taken to protect the American people and to secure air travel.

First, I directed that we take immediate steps to ensure the safety of the traveling public. We made sure that all flights still in the air were secure and could land safely. We immediately enhanced screening and security procedures for all flights, domestic and international. We added Federal air marshals to flights entering and leaving the United States. And we're working closely in this country—Federal, State, and local law enforcement—with our international partners.

Second, I've ordered two important reviews, because it's absolutely critical that we learn from this incident and take the necessary

measures to prevent future acts of terrorism. The first review involves our watch list system, which our Government has had in place for many years to identify known and suspected terrorists so that we can prevent their entry into the United States.

Apparently, the suspect in the Christmas incident was in this system, but not on a watch list such as the so-called no-fly list. So I've ordered a thorough review not only of how information related to the subject was handled but of the overall watch list system and how it can be strengthened.

The second review will examine all screening policies, technologies, and procedures related to air travel. We need to determine just how the suspect was able to bring dangerous explosives aboard an aircraft and what additional steps we can take to thwart future attacks.

Third, I've directed my national security team to keep up the pressure on those who would attack our country. We do not yet have all the answers about this latest attempt, but those who would slaughter innocent men, women, and children must know that the United States will more—do more than simply strengthen our defenses; we will continue to use every element of our national power to disrupt, to dismantle, and defeat the violent extremists who threaten us, whether they are from Afghanistan or Pakistan, Yemen or Somalia, or anywhere where they are plotting attacks against the U.S. homeland.

Finally, the American people should remain vigilant, but also be confident. Those plotting against us seek not only to undermine our security but also the open society and the values that we cherish as Americans. This incident, like several that have preceded it, demonstrates that an alert and courageous citizenry are far more resilient than an isolated extremist. As a nation, we will do everything in our power to protect our country. As Americans, we will never give in to fear or division; we will be guided by our hopes, our unity, and our deeply held values. That's who we are as Americans. That's what our brave men and women in uniform are standing up for as they spend the holidays in harm's way. And we will continue to do everything that we can to keep America safe in the new year and beyond.

Situation in Iran

Before I leave, let me also briefly address the events that have taken place over the last few days in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The United States joins with the international community in strongly condemning the violent and unjust suppression of innocent Iranian citizens, which has apparently resulted in detentions, injuries, and even death.

For months, the Iranian people have sought nothing more than to exercise their universal rights. Each time they have done so, they have been met with the iron fist of brutality, even on solemn occasions and holy days. And each time that has happened the world has watched with deep admiration for the courage and the conviction of the Iranian people, who are part of Iran's great and enduring civilization.

What's taking place within Iran is not about the United States or any other country; it's about the Iranian people and their aspirations for justice and a better life for themselves. And the decision of Iran's leaders to govern through fear and tyranny will not succeed in making those aspirations go away. As I said in Oslo, it's telling when governments fear the aspirations of their own people more than the power of any other nation.

Along with all free nations, the United States stands with those who seek their universal rights. We call upon the Iranian Government to abide by the international obligations that it has to respect the rights of its own people. We call for the immediate release of all who have been unjustly detained within Iran. We will continue to bear witness to the extraordinary events that are taking place there. And I'm confident that history will be on the side of those who seek justice.

Thank you very much, everybody, and happy New Year.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:01 a.m. at Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay. In his remarks, he referred to Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, suspect in the December 25

explosive device incident on Northwest Airlines Flight 253. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Observance of Kwanzaa
December 28, 2009

Michelle and I send warm wishes to all those celebrating Kwanzaa this holiday season. This is a joyous time of year when African Americans and all Americans come together to celebrate our blessings and the richness of our cultural traditions. This is also a time of reflection and renewal as we come to the end of one year and the beginning of another. The Kwanzaa message tells us that we should recall the lessons of the past even as we seize the promise of tomorrow.

The seven principles of Kwanzaa—unity, self determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith—express the values that have inspired us as individuals and families, communities and country. These same principles have sustained us as a nation during our darkest hours and provided hope for better days to come. Michelle and I know the challenges facing many African American families and families in all communities at this time, but we also know the spirit of perseverance and hope that is ever present in the community. It is in this spirit that our family extends our prayers and best wishes during this season and for the new year to come.

Remarks in Kaneohe
December 29, 2009

Good morning. Yesterday I updated the American people on the immediate steps we took, the increased screening and security of air travel, to keep our country safe in the wake of the attempted terrorist attack on Christmas Day. And I announced two reviews, a review of our terrorist watch list system and a review of our air travel screening, so we can find out what went wrong, fix it, and prevent future attacks.

Those reviews began on Sunday and are now underway. Earlier today I issued the former [formal]* guidelines for those reviews and directed that preliminary findings be provided to the White House by this Thursday. It's essential that we diagnose the problems quickly and deal with them immediately.

Now, the more comprehensive, formal reviews and recommendations for improvement will be completed in the coming weeks, and I'm committed to working with Congress and our intelligence, law enforcement, and homeland security communities to take all necessary steps to protect the country.

I wanted to speak to the American people again today because some of this preliminary information that has surfaced in the last 24 hours raises some serious concerns. It's been widely reported that the father of the suspect in the Christmas incident warned U.S. officials in Africa about his son's extremist views. It now appears that weeks ago, this information was passed to a component of our intelligence community, but was not effectively distributed so as to get the suspect's name on a no-fly list.

There appears to be other deficiencies as well. Even without this one report, there were bits of information available within the intelligence community that could have and should have been pieced together. We've achieved much since 9/11 in terms of collecting information that relates to terrorists and potential terrorist attacks, but it's becoming clear that the system that has been in place for years now is not sufficiently up to date to take full

* White House correction.

advantage of the information we collect and the knowledge we have.

Had this critical information been shared, it could have been compiled with other intelligence and a fuller, clearer picture of the suspect would have emerged. The warning signs would have triggered red flags and the suspect would have never been allowed to board that plane for America.

Now, the professionalism of the men and women in our intelligence, counterterrorism, and law enforcement and homeland security communities is extraordinary. They are some of the most hard-working, most dedicated Americans that I've ever met. In pursuit of our security here at home, they risk their lives, day in, day out, in this country and around the world.

Few Americans see their work, but all Americans are safer because of their successes. They have targeted and taken out violent extremists; they have disrupted plots and saved countless American lives; they are making real and daily progress in our mission to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida and other extremist networks around the world. And for this, every American owes them a profound and lasting debt of gratitude.

Moreover, as Secretary Napolitano has said, once the suspect attempted to take down Flight 253—after his attempt, it's clear that passengers and crew, our homeland security systems, and our aviation security took all appropriate actions. But what's also clear is this: When our Government has information on a known extremist and that information is not shared and acted upon as it should have been, so that this extremist boards a plane with dangerous explosives that could have cost nearly 300 lives, a systemic failure has occurred. And I consider that totally unacceptable.

The reviews I've ordered will surely tell us more. But what already is apparent is that there was a mix of human and systemic failures that contributed to this potential catastrophic breach of security. We need to learn from this episode and act quickly to fix the flaws in our system, because our security is at stake and lives are at stake.

I fully understand that even when every person charged with ensuring our security does what they are trained to do, even when every system works exactly as intended, there is still no 100 percent guarantee of success. Yet this should only compel us to work even harder, to be even more innovative and relentless in our efforts.

As President, I will do everything in my power to support the men and women in intelligence, law enforcement, and homeland security to make sure they've got the tools and resources they need to keep America safe. But it's also my job to ensure that our intelligence, law enforcement, and homeland security systems and the people in them are working effectively and held accountable. I intend to fulfill that responsibility and insist on accountability at every level.

That's the spirit guiding our reviews into the attempted attack on Christmas Day. That's the spirit that will guide all our efforts in the days and years ahead.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:26 a.m. at Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay. In his remarks, he referred to Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, suspect in the December 25 explosive device incident on Northwest Airlines Flight 253, and his father Alhaji Umaru Mutallab. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Memorandum on Aviation Screening Technology and Procedures Review
December 29, 2009

Memorandum for the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Energy, and the Director of National Intelligence

Subject: Aviation Screening Technology and Procedures Review

On December 27, 2009, I directed that an immediate review of aviation screening technology be initiated. This review should be led by the Department of Homeland Security, working with other departments and agencies including the Department of Energy and the National Laboratories. All aspects of aviation screening technology and procedures regarding domestic and international air travel should be considered as part of this review. This review shall be conducted in a manner that does not interfere with the ongoing criminal investigation and prosecution of any individuals involved in the attempt to detonate an explosive device onboard Northwest flight 253 on December 25, 2009.

A preliminary report, including recommendations for strengthening aviation screening technology and procedures and outlining how the Department of Homeland Security plans to proceed, shall be provided to the White House Staff Secretary by December 31, 2009. Follow-up direction will be provided, as appropriate, based on the contents of the December 31, 2009, report.

BARACK OBAMA

Memorandum on Inventory of Watchlisting Files and Procedures Review
December 29, 2009

Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Director of National Intelligence, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, and the Director of the National Security Agency

Subject: Inventory of Watchlisting Files and Procedures Review

On December 27, 2009, I directed that the White House lead an interagency review of the watchlisting system in the aftermath of the December 25, 2009, attempt to detonate an explosive device onboard Northwest flight 253. This review should include the following input from departments and agencies:

- An inventory of all intelligence or other information in U.S. Government files that existed prior to and up through December 25, 2009, relevant or potentially relevant to the alleged attempt to detonate an explosive device onboard Northwest flight 253, the individual allegedly responsible, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, and the date on which the intelligence or other information was available. In addition, a written account of how any such intelligence or other information was handled, shared, and acted upon within individual departments and agencies and what intelligence or other information was shared with others.
- A written account of the standards and processes for nominating, reviewing, and approving or denying individuals for placement on the Terrorist Watchlist, including a summary of how those standards and processes have developed, or have been revised, since 2001.

All aspects of this review shall be conducted in a manner that does not interfere with the ongoing criminal investigation and prosecution

of any individuals involved in the attempt to detonate an explosive device onboard Northwest flight 253. Please provide a response to this directive, including initial findings and recommendations regarding ways to strengthen the watchlisting system, to the White House Staff Secretary by December 31, 2009. Follow-up direction will be provided, as appropriate, based on input received on December 31, 2009.

BARACK OBAMA

Message to the Congress on the Generalized System of Preferences
December 23, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) offers duty-free treatment to specified products that are imported from designated beneficiary developing countries. The GSP is authorized by title V of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (the "Act").

In accordance with sections 502(f)(1)(A) and 502(f)(2) of the Act, I am providing notification of my intent to add the Republic of Maldives to the list of beneficiary developing countries under the GSP program and my intent to terminate the designations of Croatia and Equatorial Guinea as beneficiary developing countries under the GSP program.

In Proclamation 6813 of July 28, 1995, the designation of Maldives as a beneficiary developing country for purposes of the GSP program was suspended. After considering the criteria set forth in sections 501 and 502 of the Act, I have determined that the suspension of the designation of Maldives as a GSP beneficiary developing country should be ended.

In addition, I have determined that Croatia and Equatorial Guinea have each become a "high income" country, as defined by the official statistics of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. In accordance with section 502(e) of the Act, I have determined that the designations of Croatia and Equatorial Guinea as beneficiary developing countries under the GSP program should be terminated, effective January 1, 2011.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
December 23, 2009.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 30.

Memorandum of Disapproval for Legislation Continuing Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2010
December 30, 2009

The enactment of H.R. 3326 (Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2010, Public Law 111–118), which was signed into law on December 19, 2009, has rendered the enactment of H.J.Res. 64 (Continuing Appropriations, FY 2010) unnecessary. Accordingly, I am withholding my approval from the bill. (The Pocket Veto Case, 279 U.S. 655 (1929)).

To leave no doubt that the bill is being vetoed as unnecessary legislation, in addition to withholding my signature, I am also returning H.J.Res. 64 to the Clerk of the House of Representatives, along with this Memorandum of Disapproval.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
December 30, 2009.

Statement on Preliminary Assessments From Reviews Ordered on the Christmas Day Terrorist Attack
December 31, 2009

This morning I spoke with John Brennan about preliminary assessments from the ongoing consultations I have ordered into the human and systemic failures that occurred leading up to the attempted act of terrorism on Christmas Day and about our Government-wide efforts at continued vigilance on homeland security and counterterrorism efforts. In a separate call, I spoke with Sec. Napolitano to receive an update on both the Department of Homeland Security review of detection capabilities and the enhanced security measures in place since the Christmas Day incident.

I anticipate receiving assessments from several agencies this evening and will review those tonight and over the course of the weekend. On Tuesday, in Washington, I will meet personally with relevant agency heads to discuss our ongoing reviews as well as security enhancements and intelligence-sharing improvements in our homeland security and counterterrorism operations.

Message to the Central Intelligence Agency on the Terrorist Attack in Khost Province, Afghanistan
December 31, 2009

To the men and women of the CIA:

I write to mark a sad occasion in the history of the CIA and our country. Yesterday, seven Americans in Afghanistan gave their lives in service to their country. Michelle and I have their families, friends and colleagues in our thoughts and prayers.

These brave Americans were part of a long line of patriots who have made great sacrifices for their fellow citizens, and for our way of life. The United States would not be able to maintain the freedom and security that we cherish without decades of service from the dedicated men and women of the CIA. You have helped us understand the world as it is, and taken great risks to protect our country. You have served in the shadows, and your sacrifices have sometimes been unknown to your fellow citizens, your friends, and even your families.

In recent years, the CIA has been tested as never before. Since our country was attacked on September 11, 2001, you have served on the frontlines in directly confronting the dangers of the 21st century. Because of your service, plots have been disrupted, American lives have been saved, and our Allies and partners have been more secure. Your triumphs and even your names may be unknown to your fellow Americans, but your service is deeply appreciated. Indeed, I know firsthand the excellent quality of your work because I rely on it every day.

The men and women who gave their lives in Afghanistan did their duty with courage, honor and excellence, and we must draw strength from the example of their sacrifice. They will take their place on the Memorial Wall at Langley alongside so many other heroes who gave their lives on behalf of their country. And they will live on in the hearts of those who loved them, and in the freedom that they gave their lives to defend.

May God bless the memory of those we lost, and may God bless the United States of America.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Appendix A—Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this book.

July 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Annandale, VA. Later, he returned to Washington, DC. He then participated in an interview with regional press from around the country.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a bill signing ceremony for S. 614, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the Women Airforce Service Pilots ("WASP").

July 2

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with business leaders to discuss job creation and innovation.

During the day, the President participated in an interview with Jennifer Loven of the Associated Press.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jonathan Addleton to be Ambassador to Mongolia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gayleatha Beatrice Brown to be Ambassador to Burkina Faso.

The President announced his intention to nominate Earl M. Irving to be Ambassador to Swaziland.

The President announced his intention to nominate Douglas W. Kmiec to be Ambassador to Malta.

The President announced his intention to nominate Fay Hartog-Levin to be Ambassador to the Netherlands.

The President declared a major disaster in Illinois and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, and tornadoes on May 8 and 9.

July 3

In the morning, the President traveled to Camp David, MD.

July 4

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama and their daughters Sasha and Malia returned to Washington, DC.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a barbeque and concert for military personnel and their families to celebrate Independence Day.

July 5

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Abdullah Gul of Turkey.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama and their daughters Sasha and Malia traveled to Moscow, Russia, arriving the following afternoon.

July 6

In the morning, while en route aboard Air Force One, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, upon arrival at Moscow Airport, the President and Mrs. Obama and their daughters traveled to the Russian Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, where he participated in a wreath-laying ceremony. Later, they traveled to the Kremlin, where he met with President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia. They then traveled to the Ritz Carlton hotel.

In the evening, the President returned to the Kremlin. He then returned to the Ritz Carlton. Later, he and Mrs. Obama traveled to the U.S. Embassy, where they met with U.S. Embassy staff.

Later in the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the Gorkiy, where they had dinner with President Medvedev and his wife,

Svetlana Medvedeva. Later they returned to the Ritz Carlton.

The President announced his intention to nominate John R. Fernandez to be Assistant Secretary for Economic Development and Administrator of the Economic Development Administration at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Anthony Marion Babauta to be Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas at the Department of the Interior.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joseph A. Main to be Assistant Secretary for Mine Safety and Health at the Department of Labor.

The President announced his intention to nominate Alexa E. Posny to be Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services at the Department of Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Christopher P. Bertram to be Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs and Chief Financial Officer at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Terry A. Yonkers to be Assistant Secretary for Installations and Environment at the Department of the Air Force.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kelvin J. Cochran to be U.S. Fire Administrator at the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joseph G. Pizarchik to be Director of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement at the Department of the Interior.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel R. Elliott III to be Chairman of the Surface Transportation Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Patricia D. Cahill to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

July 7

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then traveled to the Novo Ogaryovo estate, where he had a working breakfast with Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin of Russia. Later, he traveled to the Gostinny Dvor, where he met with former President Mikhail S. Gorbachev of the Soviet Union.

In the afternoon, the President returned to the Ritz Carlton hotel. He and Mrs. Obama then traveled to the Kremlin, where they attended a lunch reception hosted by President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia. He then traveled to the Metropol Hotel.

Later, in the afternoon, the President returned to the Ritz Carlton.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael H. Posner to be Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stephen J. Rapp to be Ambassador at Large for War Crimes Issues at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Alexander G. Garza to be Assistant Secretary for Health Affairs and Chief Medical Officer at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate Susan L. Kurland to be Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joe Garcia to be Director of the Office of Minority Economic Impact at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kenneth A. Spearman to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Farm Credit Administration.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rolena K. Adorno and Marvin Krislov to be members of the National Council on the Humanities.

July 8

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Obama and their daughters Sasha and Malia traveled to Rome, Italy. Upon arrival at Pratica di Mare Air Base, they traveled to Quirinale Palace.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to L'Aquila, Italy, where he was greeted by

Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy. Then, at the Guardia di Finanza School, he attended a G–8 summit working lunch. Later, he attended a G–8 summit session on global issues.

Later in the afternoon, the President and Prime Minister Berlusconi toured the historic center of L'Aquila and areas affected by the April 6 earthquake. They then talked with emergency personnel who participated in earthquake recovery efforts.

During the day, the President met with Prime Minister Taro Aso of Japan.

In the evening, at the Guardia di Finanza School, the President attended a G–8 summit working dinner.

The President announced his intention to nominate Francis S. Collins to be Director of the National Institutes of Health at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President announced that he has nominated Irene C. Berger to be U.S. district judge for the Southern District of West Virginia.

The President announced that he has nominated Roberto A. Lange to be U.S. District judge for the District of South Dakota.

July 9

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, at the G–5 Building, he met with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil. Then, at the Guardia di Finanza School, he met with the leaders of the G–8, Brazil, China, India, Mexico, South Africa, and Egypt.

In the afternoon, the President participated in a photo opportunity with the leaders of the G–8, Brazil, China, India, Mexico, South Africa, and Egypt. He then had a working lunch with the leaders of the G–8, Brazil, China, India, Mexico, South Africa, Egypt, United Nations, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organization, International Energy Agency, and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Later in the afternoon, the President met with representatives of the Junior 8 (J–8) project. He then participated in a photo opportunity with G–8 leaders and J–8 representatives. Later, he attended a G–8 summit discussion on world trade.

Later in the afternoon, the President attended the G–8 summit Major Economies Forum discussion on the environment. He then met separately with Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy, Prime Minister Kevin M. Rudd of Australia, and Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom.

In the evening, the President participated in a photo opportunity with G–8 leaders. He then attended a G–8 summit dinner hosted by President Giorgio Napolitano of Italy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Brian Hayes to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Philip D. Murphy to be Ambassador to Germany.

The President announced his intention to nominate Richard A. Serino to be Deputy Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate Marcia K. McNutt to be Director of the U.S. Geological Survey and Science Adviser to the Secretary of the Interior.

July 10

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, at the Guardia di Finanza School, he attended a working breakfast and met with the leaders of the G–8, Angola, Algeria, Nigeria, Senegal, United Nations, International Monetary Fund, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank), World Trade Organization, International Energy Agency, and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

In the afternoon, the President participated in a photo opportunity with the leaders of the G–8, Angola, Algeria, Nigeria, Senegal, United Nations, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organization, International Energy Agency, and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. He then met with President Jacob Zuma of South Africa. Later, he and Mrs. Obama and their daughters Sasha and Malia traveled to Rome, Italy.

Later in the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama and their daughters traveled to the

Vatican, where he met with Secretary of State Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone of the Holy See (Vatican City). He then met with Pope Benedict XVI. Later, he and Mrs. Obama and their daughters had an audience with the Pope.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama and their daughters traveled to Accra, Ghana. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with Senator Edward M. Kennedy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Glyn T. Davies to be U.S. Representative to the Vienna Office of the United Nations with the rank of Ambassador and U.S. Representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jim R. Esquea to be Assistant Secretary for Legislation at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jonathan B. Jarvis to be Director of the National Park Service at the Department of the Interior.

The President announced his intention to nominate Dennis K. Burke to be U.S. attorney for the District of Arizona.

The President announced his intention to nominate Steven M. Dettelbach to be U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Ohio.

The President announced his intention to nominate Brendan V. Johnson to be U.S. attorney for the District of South Dakota.

The President announced his intention to nominate Karen L. Loeffler to be U.S. attorney for the District of Alaska.

The President announced his intention to nominate Florence T. Nakakuni to be U.S. attorney for the District of Hawaii.

The President announced his intention to nominate Carter M. Stewart to be U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Ohio.

July 11

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Christianborg Castle, where he participated in an arrival ceremony with President John Evans Atta Mills of Ghana. They then had breakfast. Later, he and Mrs. Obama traveled to La General Hospital, where they toured the women's clinic.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to the Accra International Conference Center.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama and their daughters Sasha and Malia traveled to Cape Coast, Ghana. Then, at the Chief's residence, he and Mrs. Obama met with Osabarima Kwesi Atta II, Omanhene of the Oguaa Traditional Area. Later, they and their daughters toured the Cape Coast Castle.

Later in the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama and their daughters returned to Accra, Ghana.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama and their daughters returned to Washington, DC, arriving the following morning.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines to the White House on July 30.

July 12

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Supreme Court Associate Justice-designate Sonia M. Sotomayor to discuss her upcoming Senate confirmation hearing.

July 13

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with labor leaders. Later, also in the Roosevelt Room, he met with Jewish community leaders. He then met with Democratic congressional leaders to discuss health care reform legislation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Regina M. Benjamin to be Surgeon General at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President declared a major disaster in Tennessee and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, straight-line winds, and flooding from June 12 through14.

July 14

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Mt. Clemens, MI. He then traveled to Warren, MI, where at Macomb Community College, he met with local elected officials. Later, he traveled to St. Louis, MO.

In the evening, at Busch Stadium, the President visited the locker rooms of the National League and American League teams of the Major League Baseball All-Star Game. He then met with children from the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Later, he participated in an interview with Bob Costas of NBC Sports.

Later in the evening, the President threw out the first pitch and watched the game. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Aaron S. Williams to be Director of the Peace Corps.

July 15

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. He then met with Senators Robert Corker, Saxby Chambliss, and Lisa Murkowski to discuss health care reform. Later, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Representative-elect Judy Chu of California to congratulate her on her July 14 election victory.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq to the White House on July 22.

July 16

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met separately with Senators E. Benjamin Nelson and Olympia J. Snowe to discuss health care reform.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to New York City. While en route aboard Air Force One, he participated in a roundtable interview. He then traveled to Holmdel, NJ. Later, he returned to New York City.

In the evening, at the Waldorf Astoria hotel, the President attended a Democratic National Committee fundraising dinner. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jacqueline A. Berrien to be Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

July 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an economic briefing followed by an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had lunch with Vice President Biden.

During the day, the President met with Democratic members of the House of Representatives to discuss health care reform. He also met with Senators Evan Bayh and Kent Conrad to discuss health care reform.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Guadalajara, Mexico, August 9 and 10 to attend the North American Leaders Summit with President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert D. Hormats to be Under Secretary for Economic, Energy, and Agricultural Affairs at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gary S. Guzy to be Deputy Director of the Office of Environmental Quality (Council on Environmental Quality).

The President announced his intention to nominate Lee A. Feinstein to be Ambassador to Poland.

July 18

In the morning, the President traveled to Camp David, MD.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia to congratulate him on his reelection, offer U.S. assistance after the July 17 terrorist attacks in Jakarta, and discuss Indonesia-U.S. relations.

July 19

In the morning, the President returned to Washington, DC.

July 20

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, at the Children's National Medical Center, the President participated in a roundtable discussion with health care providers to discuss children's access to health care. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Thomas S. Monson, and Elder Dallin H. Oaks, member of the church's Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with and participated in a photo opportunity with the 2009 Raytheon MathCounts National Champions. Then, also in the Oval Office, he participated in a credentialing ceremony for newly appointed Ambassadors to the U.S.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jill E. Sommers to be a Commissioner of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

July 21

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with Democratic members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

July 22

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

The President announced his intention to nominate Dennis F. Hightower to be Deputy Secretary of the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jeffrey A. Goldstein to be Under Secretary for Domestic Finance at the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced his intention to nominate Alberto M. Fernandez to be Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jose W. Fernandez to be Assistant Secretary for Economic, Energy, and Business Affairs at the Department of State.

July 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Later, he traveled to Cleveland, OH, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, the President toured the Cleveland Clinic. Later, he traveled to Chicago, IL, arriving in the evening. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with Chicago White Sox pitcher Mark A. Buehrle to congratulate him on throwing a perfect game.

Later in the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving the following morning.

The President announced that he has nominated Ketanji B. Jackson to be a member of the U.S. Sentencing Commission.

July 24

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Vice President Joe Biden. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and Senator Max S. Baucus.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Sgt. James Crowley of the Cambridge, Massachusetts, Police Department to discuss the recent arrest of Harvard University Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and to discuss having Sgt. Crowley and Professor Gates meet with him at the White House. He then had a telephone conversation with Professor Gates to discuss his earlier conversation with Sgt. Crowley and to invite him to the White House.

Later in the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom to discuss U.S. and British military operations in Afghanistan. Then, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers.

In the evening, at the Marine Barracks, Washington, DC, the President and Mrs. Obama attended the Evening Parade.

July 27

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) President Joseph S. Blatter.

July 28

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with the chairs of the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue. Then, in the Roosevelt Room, they greeted the expanded delegations of the U.S.-China Strategic Economic Dialogue.

The President announced his intention to nominate David M. Michaels to be Assistant Secretary for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration at the Department of Labor.

The President announced his intention to nominate Benjamin B. Tucker to be Deputy Director for State, Local, and Tribal Affairs at the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mary Jo Wills to be Ambassador to Mauritius and Seychelles.

The President announced his intention to nominate David S. Ferriero to be Archivist of the U.S. at the National Archives and Records Administration.

July 29

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Raleigh, NC.

In the afternoon, at Broughton High School, the President participated in an interview with Univision. He then traveled to Bristol, VA, where, at Kroger's Supermarket, he participated in a town hall meeting on health care reform.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

July 30

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Vice President Biden.

In the evening, in the Rose Garden, the President and Vice President Biden met with Sgt. James Crowley of the Cambridge, MA, Police Department and Harvard University Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

The President announced his intention to nominate Anne Meagher Northup to be a Commissioner of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Frank Kendall III to be Deputy Under Secretary for Acquisition and Technology at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel I. Werfel to be Controller of the Office of Federal Financial Management at the Office of Management and Budget.

The President announced his intention to nominate Susan T. Grundmann to be Chairman of the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Anne M. Wagner to be a member of the Merit Systems Protection Board, with the designation of Vice Chair.

The President declared a major disaster in Maine and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, and landslides from June 18 through July 8.

July 31

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Ivan G. Seidenberg, chairman and chief executive officer, Verizon Communications Inc.; Michael T. Duke, president and chief executive officer, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.; Daniel R. DiMicco, director and chairman of the board of directors, Nucor Corporation; and Howard Schultz, founder, chairman of the board of directors, president, and chief executive officer, Starbucks Corporation. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

In the evening, at Blair House, the President and Vice President Biden met with members of the Cabinet and White House staff.

The President announced his intention to nominate Abdul K. Kallon to be a judge for the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jacqueline H. Nguyen to be a judge for the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California.

The President announced that he has nominated Daniel G. Bogden to be U.S. attorney for the District of Nevada.

The President announced that he has nominated Deborah K.R. Gilg to be U.S. attorney for the District of Nebraska.

The President announced that he has nominated Timothy J. Heaphy to be U.S. attorney for the Western District of Virginia.

The President announced that he has nominated Peter F. Neronha to be U.S. attorney for the District of Rhode Island.

The President announced that he has nominated David L. Cargill, Jr., to be U.S. marshal for the District of New Hampshire.

The President announced that he has nominated David E. Demag to be U.S. marshal for the District of Vermont.

The President announced that he has nominated Genevieve L. May to be U.S. marshal for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

The President declared a major disaster in Nebraska and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, and tornadoes from June 5 through 26.

August 1

In the morning, the President, Mrs. Obama, their daughters Sasha and Malia, and his mother-in-law Marian Robinson traveled to Camp David, MD.

August 2

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

August 3

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden had an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch with Amir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah of Kuwait. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Senator Thomas R. Harkin.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt to the White House on August 18.

August 4

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an

intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with American Legion National Commander David K. Rehbein and American Legion Washington, DC, office Executive Director Peter S. Gaytan. Then, he had a telephone conversation with President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia.

In the afternoon, in the State Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch with the Senate Democratic Caucus. Then, in the Roosevelt Room, he and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki participated in an interview with military reporters. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Vice President Biden. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

In the evening, the President had separate telephone conversations with the families of American journalists Laura Ling and Euna Lee, who had been held by North Korean authorities since March 17, 2009, to discuss the journalists' release from North Korean custody.

August 5

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with former President William J. Clinton to thank him for his role in obtaining the release of American journalists Laura Ling and Euna Lee from North Korean custody. Later, he traveled to Wakarusa, IN.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

August 6

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with members of the Senate Finance Committee.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Adviser John O. Brennan. He then traveled to McLean, VA.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Supreme Court Associate Justice Sonia M. Sotomayor to congratulate her on her Senate confirmation.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate David C. Gompert to be Principal Deputy National Intelligence Director of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

The President announced his intention to nominate William E. Kennard to be U.S. Representative to the European Union, with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Alan D. Solomont to be Ambassador to Spain and Andorra.

The President announced his intention to nominate the following individuals to be members of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation:

Robert J. Grey, Jr.;
John Gerson Levi;
Martha L. Minow;
Julie A. Reiskin; and
Gloria Valencia-Weber.

The President announced that he has designated Ruth Y. Goldway as Chair of the Postal Regulatory Commission.

August 7

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Senator Charles E. Schumer.

The White House announced that the President will meet with Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada at the White House on September 16.

The President announced that he has nominated Jane Stranch to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit.

The President announced that he has nominated Thomas Vanaskie to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit.

The President announced that he has nominated Edward M. Chen to be U.S. district judge for the Northern District of California.

The President announced that he has nominated Dolly Gee to be a judge for the Central District of California.

The President announced that he has nominated Richard Seeborg to be a judge for the Northern District of California.

The President announced that he has nominated Steven O'Donnell to be U.S. marshal for the District of Rhode Island.

The President announced that he has nominated Kenyen Brown to be U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Alabama.

The President announced that he has nominated Neil MacBride to be U.S. attorney for the Easter District of Virginia.

The President announced that he has nominated Benjamin Wagner to be U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of California.

The President announced that he has nominated Barry B. White to be Ambassador to Norway.

August 9

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Guadalajara, Mexico. Upon arrival at Don Miguel Hidalgo Y Costilla International Airport, he traveled to the Cabanas Cultural Center.

In the evening, the President met with President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico. Later, he participated in a working dinner with President Calderon and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada. They then attended a cultural event.

August 10

In the morning, the President traveled to the Cabanas Cultural Center, where he met with President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada.

In the afternoon, the President participated in a photo opportunity with President Calderon and Prime Minister Harper. They then participated in a photo opportunity and met with police training forces from Mexico, the U.S., and Canada. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

August 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, he traveled to Portsmouth, NH, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

August 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

August 13

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

The President declared a major disaster in Iowa and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe storm on July 10.

August 14

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Later, he and Mrs. Obama and their daughters Sasha and Malia traveled to Belgrade, MT, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Big Sky, MT.

The President announced his intention to nominate Cynthia L. Quarterman to be Administrator of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced that he will designate Mary L. Jordan as Chair of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission.

The President declared a major disaster in Kentucky and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, straight-line winds, and flooding on August 4.

August 15

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama and their daughters Sasha and Malia traveled to Yellowstone National Park, where they toured the park.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama and their daughters traveled to Grand Junction, CO.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama and their daughters traveled to Phoenix, AZ.

August 16

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama and their daughters Sasha and Malia traveled to Grand Canyon National Park, where they toured the park. Later, they returned to Phoenix, AZ.

August 17

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama and their daughters Sasha and Malia returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

August 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President and Vice President Biden had a working lunch with President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Vice President Biden.

Later in the afternoon, in the Situation Room, the President met with former President William J. Clinton to thank him for his role in obtaining the release of American journalists Laura Ling and Euna Lee, who had been held by North Korean authorities since March 17, and to get a briefing from former President Clinton on his trip to North Korea. Then, in the Oval Office, he had another meeting with former President Clinton.

August 19

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, on the South Lawn, the President met with children from the Victory Junction Gang Camp in Randleman, NC. Then, also on the South Lawn, he participated in an interview with Nicole Manske and Brad Daugherty of ESPN2's "NASCAR Now" program. Later, he participated in a conference call with religious leaders to discuss health care reform.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with Senators Olympia J. Snowe and Kent Conrad to discuss health care reform.

August 20

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with King Abdullah II of Jordan.

August 21

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with former Senate Majority Leader Thomas A. Daschle to discuss health care reform.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Camp David, MD.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Seoul, South Korea, to attend the funeral of former President Kim Daejung on August 23:

Madeleine K. Albright (head of delegation);
Kathleen Stephens;
Harold H. Koh;
Stephen W. Bosworth;
Donald P. Gregg;
Thomas C. Hubbard;
James T. Laney;

James A.S. Leach;
Evans J.R. Revere; and
Wendy R. Sherman.

The President declared a major disaster in Tennessee and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding from July 15 through 17.

August 23

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama and their daughters Sasha and Malia traveled to Martha's Vineyard, MA.

August 26

In the morning, White House Trip Director Marvin Nicholson informed the President of the death of Senator Edward M. Kennedy. He then had a telephone conversation with Senator Kennedy's wife Victoria to express his condolences.

August 28

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Boston, MA.

August 29

In the morning, at the Fairmont Copley Plaza hotel, the President met with Victoria R. Kennedy, wife of Senator Edward M. Kennedy who passed away on August 25. Later, at the Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, he and Mrs. Obama attended Senator Kennedy's funeral.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama returned to Martha's Vineyard, MA.

August 30

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama and their daughters Sasha and Malia traveled to Cape Cod Coast Guard Air Station. He and Mrs. Obama then met with the family of Cpl. Nicholas Xiarhos, USMC, who was killed in Afghanistan on July 23. Later, they and their daughters returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

August 31

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Gdansk, Poland, to attend the 70th anniversary observance ceremony of the outbreak of World War II on September 1:

James L. Jones, Jr. (head of delegation);
Victor H. Ashe;
Marcia C. Kaptur; and
Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall.

September 1

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President was briefed on H1N1 influenza preparedness and response efforts. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Vice President Joe Biden.

The President declared a major disaster in New York and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding from August 8 through 10.

September 2

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Democratic Party of Japan President Yukio Hatoyama to congratulate him on his party's August 30 election victories and to discuss Japan-U.S. relations.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Camp David, MD.

September 3

The President announced his intention to nominate Barbara J. Bennett to be Chief Financial Officer of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael W. Punke to be Deputy U.S. Trade Representative—Geneva Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

The President announced that Thomas P. D'Agostino will continue serving as Under Secretary for Nuclear Security at the Department of Energy and Administrator for Nuclear Security at the National Nuclear Security Administration.

September 6

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama and their daughters Sasha and Malia returned to Washington, DC.

September 7

In the morning, the President traveled to Cincinnati, OH, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced that Ron Bloom will serve as Senior Counselor to the President for Manufacturing Policy.

September 8

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Later, he and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan traveled to Arlington, VA.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, at the Supreme Court, he and Vice President Biden attended an investiture ceremony in honor of Supreme Court Associate Justice Sonia M. Sotomayor. Then they returned to the White House, where they, in the Oval Office, met with Senator Majority Leader Harry Reid and Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with the Professional Golfers Association Champions of America.

September 9

In the morning, the President traveled to New York City. Later, at Lincoln Center, he attended the memorial service for Walter L. Cronkite.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

September 10

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President met with Vice President Joe Biden. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi General Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with Democratic Senators to discuss health care reform.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom. Also, in the Oval Office, he met with Chairman of the National People's Congress of China Wu Bangguo. Also, in the East Room, he and Vice President Joe Biden participated in the official Cabinet photograph.

The President announced his intention to nominate Scott D. O'Malia to be a Commissioner of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Erroll G. Southers to be Assistant Secretary for the Transportation Security Administration at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate Barbara S. Haskew and Neil G. McBride to be members of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

The President announced his intention to nominate Steven L. Jacques to be Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate Patrick Gallagher to be Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Harris D. Sherman to be Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment at the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced that he has appointed Linda Breathitt as Federal Representative of the Southern States Energy Board.

The President announced that he has appointed L. Preston Bryant, Jr., as Chair of the National Capital Planning Commission.

The President announced that he has appointed Jack Leslie as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the U.S. African Development Foundation.

The President announced that Sean Stackley will continue to serve as Assistant Secretary for Research, Development and Acquisition at the Department of the Navy.

September 11

In the morning, at 8:46 a.m., on the South Lawn, the President and Mrs. Obama participated in a moment of silence to commemorate the eighth anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Later, they traveled to Arlington, VA, where they met with families of victims of the attacks. They then returned to Washington, DC.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama toured a Habitat for Humanity housing project and helped paint one of the homes.

During the day, he participated in an interview with Steve Kroft of CBS's "60 Minutes" program for later broadcast. He also had a telephone conversation with International Olympic Committee President Jacques Rogge. Also, in the Yellow Oval Room, he and Mrs. Obama met with Crown Prince of the Netherlands Willem-Alexander and his wife Princess Maxima.

September 12

In the morning, the President traveled to Minneapolis, MN, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Eric L. Hirschhorn to be Under Secretary for Export Administration and head of the Bureau of Industry and Security at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gladys J. Commons to be Assistant Secretary for Financial Management and Comptroller for the Department of the Navy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Leslie V. Rowe to be Ambassador to Mozambique.

The President announced his intention to nominate Cynthia Stroum to be Ambassador to Luxembourg.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jeffrey L. Bleich to be Ambassador to Australia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Irvin M. Mayfield, Jr., to be a member of the National Council on the Arts.

The President announced that he has designated Richard A. Lidinsky, Jr., as Chair of the Federal Maritime Commission.

September 14

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to New York City.

In the afternoon, at Il Mulino restaurant, the President had lunch with former President William J. Clinton. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

In the evening, in the Library, the President participated in an interview with Julianna Goldman of Bloomberg News.

The President announced his intention to nominate Chai R. Feldblum to be a Commissioner of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Carmen L. Lomellin to be U.S. Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Frederick D. Barton to be U.S. Representative on the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jide J. Zeitlin to be U.S. Representative to the United Nations for U.N. Management and Reform with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Charles Collyns to be Assistant Secretary for International Finance at the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced that he has nominated Barbara M. Keenan to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit.

The President announced that he has appointed Mary Jacksteit as Chair of the Federal Service Impasses Panel.

The President announced that he has appointed the following individuals as members of the Federal Service Impasses Panel:

Martin H. Malin;
Barbara B. Franklin;
Marvin E. Johnson;
Thomas E. Angelo;
Edward F. Hartfield; and
Don Wasserman.

September 15

In the morning, the President traveled to Warren, OH. Later, he traveled to Pittsburgh, PA, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Philadelphia, PA.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Nicolas Sarkozy of France.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

September 16

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with former Secretary of State Colin L. Powell. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with Senators John D. "Jay" Rockefeller IV, Robert Bennett, and Ronald L. Wyden to discuss health care reform.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Jan Fischer of the Czech Republic to discuss missile defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Elizabeth M. Robinson to be Chief Financial Officer of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael F. Mundaca to be Assistant Secretary for Tax Policy at the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced that he has appointed Margo Lion and George Stevens, Jr., as Cochairmen of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities.

The President announced that he has appointed Mary S. Campbell as Vice Chairman of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities.

September 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to College Park, MD.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the White House Movie Theater, he hosted a screening for a portion of the documentary "The National Parks: America's Best Idea."

September 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with recipients of the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award. Later, he participated in separate interviews with ABC News, CBS News, NBC News, CNN, and Univision for later broadcast.

The White House announced that the President will meet with Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama of Japan in New York City, on September 23.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero of Spain to the White House on October 13.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel W. Yohannes to be Chief Executive Officer of the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Arun Majumdar to be Director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gustavo Aranavat to be U.S. Executive Director of the Inter-American Development Bank.

The President announced that he has nominated Michael J. Moore to be U.S. attorney for the Middle District of Georgia.

The President announced that he has nominated Carmen M. Ortiz to be U.S. attorney for the District of Massachusetts.

The President announced that he has nominated Edward J. Tarver to be U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Georgia.

September 19

The White House announced that the President will host a trilateral meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority on September 22 in New York City.

September 21

In the morning, the President and Jill Biden traveled to Troy, NY, where they toured Hudson Valley Community College.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to New York City. Upon arrival at John F. Kennedy International Airport, he traveled to the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. Later, he traveled to CBS Studios, where he participated in the taping of an interview with David Letterman for the "Late Show with David Letterman."

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to the Waldorf Astoria.

September 22

In the morning, the President traveled to United Nations Headquarters. Later, he returned to the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. He then met separately with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority.

In the afternoon, the President had lunch with sub-Saharan African heads of state. Later, he traveled to the Sheraton Hotel. He then returned to the Waldorf Astoria.

In the evening, the President returned to United Nations Headquarters, where he attended United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's climate change summit dinner. Later, he returned to the Waldorf Astoria.

The President announced his intention to nominate Elaine Schuster, William D. Delahunt, and Christopher H. Smith to be U.S. Representatives to the 64th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The President announced his intention to nominate Laura Gore Ross and Wellington E. Webb to be Alternate U.S. Representatives to the 64th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mary B. Warlick to be Ambassador to Serbia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Islam A. Siddiqui to be Chief Agricultural Negotiator of the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

The President announced his intention to nominate Alan D. Bersin to be Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection at the Department of Homeland Security.

September 23

In the morning, the President traveled to United Nations Headquarters. Later, he returned to the Waldorf Astoria.

In the afternoon, the President returned to United Nations Headquarters, where he attended a meeting with leaders of countries that are contributing to United Nations peacekeeping forces. He then participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at a memorial for United Nations staff members killed in Baghdad, Iraq, in 2003. Later, he returned to the Waldorf Astoria, where he was joined by Mrs. Obama.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where they hosted a reception for heads of state. Later, they returned to the Waldorf Astoria.

The White House announced that the President, President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan, and Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom will chair the Friends of Democratic Pakistan Summit in New York on September 24.

The President announced that he has appointed the following individuals as members of the Commission To Study the Potential Creation of a National Museum of the American Latino:

Emilio Estefan, Jr.;
Andres W. Lopez;
Cindy Pena;
Abigail M. Pollak; and
Cid Wilson.

September 24

In the morning, the President traveled to United Nations Headquarters. Later, he returned to the Waldorf Astoria Hotel.

In the afternoon, the President, President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan, and Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom chaired the Friends of Democratic Pakistan Summit. Later, he and Mrs. Obama traveled to Pittsburgh, PA.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, where they greeted G–20 leaders and their spouses. He then participated in the G–20 leaders working dinner. Later, they traveled to the Omni William Penn Hotel.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert R. King to be Special Envoy on North Korean Human Rights Issues at the Department of State with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Carolyn W. Colvin to be Deputy Commissioner of Social Security at the Social Security Administration.

The President announced his intention to nominate Marisa Lago to be Assistant Secretary for International Markets and Development at the Department of the Treasury.

The President declared a major disaster in Georgia and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding beginning on September 18 and continuing.

September 25

In the morning, the President traveled to the Pittsburgh Convention Center, where he met with Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom. He then participated in G–20 summit meetings.

In the afternoon, the President participated in the G–20 summit official photograph. He then attended the G–20 leaders' lunch. Later, he participated in G–20 summit meetings.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to the Omni William Penn Hotel, where he met with U.S. Ambassador to Ireland Daniel M. Rooney. Later, he returned to the Pittsburgh Convention Center.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael C. Polt to be Ambassador to Estonia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Victoria A. Espinel to be U.S. Intellectual Property Enforcement Coordinator at the Office of Management and Budget.

The President announced his intention to nominate Adele Logan Alexander to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities.

The President announced that he has nominated Richard Callahan to be U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Missouri.

The President announced that he has nominated Michael W. Cotter to be U.S. attorney for the District of Montana.

The President announced that he has nominated Nicholas A. Klinefeldt to be U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Iowa.

The President announced that he has nominated Stephanie M. Rose to be U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Iowa.

September 26

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Robert S. Mueller III to express his gratitude for the Bureau's counterterrorism efforts. Later, he called in to a New York Police Department counterterrorism briefing that was being given to Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Adviser John O. Brennan to thank the police officers for their work during the United Nations General Assembly and for their continued counterterrorism efforts.

September 27

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to congratulate her on her reelection and discuss German-U.S. relations.

September 28

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Mrs. Obama participated in an interview with Jodi Kantor and Rebecca Corbett of New York Times Magazine.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with White House Counsel Gregory B. Craig to discuss the closing of the Guantanamo Bay detention facilities.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Copenhagen, Denmark, on October 1 to support Chicago's bid for the 2016 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games at the 121st International Olympic Committee Session.

September 29

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

The President declared a major disaster in the territory of American Samoa and ordered Federal aid to supplement territory and local recovery efforts in the area struck by an earthquake, tsunami, and flooding beginning on September 29 and continuing.

September 30

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Bethesda, MD. Then, he and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius toured an oncology laboratory at the National Institutes of Health. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he participated in a bill signing ceremony for H.R. 1243, to provide for the award of a gold medal on behalf of Congress to Arnold Palmer. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing.

Later in the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan. Then, in the Situation Room, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with their national security team to discuss the situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sara Manzano-Diaz to be Director of the Women's Bureau at the Department of Labor.

The President announced his intention to nominate John F. Tefft to be Ambassador to Ukraine.

The President announced his intention to nominate Paul Martin to be Inspector General of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark R. Rosekind to be a member of the National Transportation Safety Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Christine H. Fox to be Director of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Roszell "Rod" Hunter to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank of the U.S.

The President announced that he has nominated Sanford Coats to be U.S. attorney for the Western District of Oklahoma.

The President announced that he has nominated Beth Phillips to be U.S. attorney for the Western District of Missouri.

The President announced that he has nominated Stephanie Villafuerte to be U.S. attorney for the District of Colorado.

The President announced that he has nominated John Kammerzell to be U.S. marshal for the District of Colorado.

The President announced that he has nominated Mark Martinez to be U.S. marshal for the District of Nebraska.

The President announced that he has nominated Stephen J. Smith to be U.S. marshal for the Southern District of Georgia.

The President declared a major disaster in Kansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding from July 8 through 14.

October 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Later, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

In the evening, the President traveled to Copenhagen, Denmark, arriving the following morning.

The President announced his intention to nominate Susan B. Carbon to be Director of the Office on Violence Against Women at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate James B. Warlick, Jr., to be Ambassador to Bulgaria.

The President announced that he has nominated Louis Butler to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin.

October 2

In the morning, aboard Air Force One, the President had a telephone conversation with President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia to express his condolences for the loss of life during the September 30 earthquake and offer U.S. disaster relief assistance. Then, upon arrival at Copenhagen Airport, Kastrup, he traveled to the Bella Center, where he was joined by Mrs. Obama. Later, they attended an informal reception with International Olympic Committee members.

Later in the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Christiansborg Palace, where they were greeted by Queen Margrethe II and Prince Consort Henrik of Denmark.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Copenhagen Airport, Kastrup, where they were joined by Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan, and his wife Annie. Then, aboard Air Force One, he met with Gen. McChrystal to discuss the situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Later in the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India to the White House on November 24.

The President announced his intention to nominate Patrick A. Corvington to be Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel I. Gordon to be Administrator for Federal Procurement Policy at the Office of Management and Budget.

The President announced his intention to nominate Pamela S. Hyde to be Administrator of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President announced his intention to nominate John H. Laub to be Director of the National Institute of Justice at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ian H. Solomon to be U.S. Executive Director of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate Richard Sorian to be Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the Department of Health and Human Services.

October 4

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister George A. Papandreou of Greece to congratulate him on his election victory and his party's success in the parliamentary elections and discuss Greek-U.S. relations.

October 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with President Jalal Talabani of Iraq. He also had a telephone conversation with President Serzh Sargsian of Armenia to discuss Armenia-Turkey relations. Later, in the

Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mary J. Miller to be Assistant Secretary for Financial Markets at the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced his intention to nominate Albert DiClemente and Anthony R. Coscia to be directors of the Amtrak Board of Directors.

October 6

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, he traveled to the National Counterterrorism Center in McLean, VA, where he met with intelligence and counterterrorism officials.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the State Dining Room, he and Vice President Biden met with congressional leaders to discuss the situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

During the day, the President dropped by a meeting between National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., and President Jalal Talabani of Iraq.

The President announced that he has nominated Denny Chin to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

The President announced that he has nominated O. Rogeriee Thompson to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit.

October 7

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Agriculture Thomas J. Vilsack.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. Later, in the Situation Room, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with their national security team to discuss the situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

During the day, The President announced his intention to nominate David Huebner to be Ambassador to New Zealand and Samoa.

The President announced his intention to nominate David D. Nelson to be Ambassador to Uruguay.

October 8

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with business leaders. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Then, on the White House basketball court, he dropped by a National Naval Medical Center Marine Wounded Warriors basketball game.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. Then, also in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Later, on the White House basketball court, he played basketball with several Cabinet Secretaries and Members of Congress.

October 9

In the morning, Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs informed the President that he had won the Nobel Peace Prize. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with Senator James H. Webb.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Vice President Biden. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with people who have been affected by outdated financial sector regulations. Then, in the Situation Room, he and Vice President Biden met with their national security team to discuss the situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Later in the afternoon, on the South Lawn, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a barbeque for U.S. Secret Service personnel and their families.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg of Norway, who congratulated him on winning the Nobel Peace Prize.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to the Holy See to attend the canonization mass of Father Damien De Veuster on October 11:

Miguel H. Diaz (head of delegation);
Daniel K. Akaka;
Donald M. Payne;
Stephen Prokop;
Bishop Larry Silva; and
Sister Carol Ann Keehan.

The President announced his intention to nominate Christina Reiss to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Vermont.

The President announced his intention to nominate Elizabeth M. Harman to be Assistant Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (Grant Programs) at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate George Apostolakis and William D. Magwood IV to be commissioners of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Peter A. Prahar to be Ambassador to Micronesia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Eleni Tsakopoulos-Kounalakis to be Ambassador to Hungary.

October 10

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India.

October 11

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl W. Eikenberry.

October 12

In the morning, the President had separate telephone conversations with President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico, President Oscar Arias Sanchez of Costa Rica, and President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia.

October 13

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Vice President Joe Biden.

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President had a working lunch with Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero of Spain. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Senator Evan Bayh. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

The President announced that he has nominated Rosanna M. Peterson to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington.

The President announced that he has nominated Sharon J. Lubinski to be U.S. marshal for the District of Minnesota.

October 14

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Situation Room, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with their national security team to discuss the situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Fairfax County, VA, where he and Secretary of Transportation Raymond H. LaHood toured the Fairfax County Parkway extension project. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Nicolas Sarkozy of France.

The President announced his intention to nominate Charles P. Blahous III to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Social Security Trust Funds.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joseph F. Bader and Jessie H.

Roberson to be members of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Peter S. Winokur to be Chair of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert D. Reischauer to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Social Security Trust Funds.

The President announced his intention to nominate Alan C. Kessler to be a Governor of the Board of Governors of the U.S. Postal Service.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Advisory Board on Radiation and Worker Health:

Henry Anderson;
R. William Field;
Richard Lemen; and
David B. Richardson.

October 15

In the morning, the President traveled to New Orleans, LA.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School, where he met with students. He then traveled to the University of New Orleans. Later, he traveled to San Francisco, CA.

Later in the afternoon, upon arrival in San Francisco, the President traveled to the InterContinental San Francisco Hotel.

In the evening, the President traveled to the Westin St. Francis Hotel. Later, he returned to the InterContinental San Francisco Hotel.

The President announced his intention to nominate Clifford L. Stanley to be Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Scott B. Quehl to be Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Secretary for Administration at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Anne S. Andrew to be Ambassador to Costa Rica.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lynnae M. Ruttledge to be Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration at the Department of Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jill L. Long Thompson to be a member of the Farm Credit Administration Board of Directors.

October 16

In the morning, the President traveled to Houston, TX, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to College Station, TX.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced that he has named George D. Mulligan, Jr., as Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of the White House Military Office.

October 17

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Abdullah Gul of Turkey.

October 18

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Belgium to attend the thanksgiving mass for Saint Damien de Veuster on October 18:

Howard W. Gutman (head of delegation);
Neil Abercrombie;
Mazie K. Hirono;
Joshua DuBois; and
Larry J. Snyder.

October 19

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with the National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge winners. Later, he traveled to Silver Spring, MD. He then returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Senator Kent Conrad.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Jakarta, Indonesia,

to attend the inauguration of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono on October 20: Lisa P. Jackson (head of delegation), Cameron R. Hume, and David N. Merrill.

October 20

In the morning, the President had separate telephone conversations with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan, Afghan Presidential candidate Abdullah Abdullah, and U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl W. Eikenberry. Then, in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Later, he traveled to New York City, where he toured the Joint Terrorism Task Force Headquarters. Then, at the Mandarin Oriental hotel, he attended a fundraiser for Democratic congressional candidate William L. Owens.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC. He then had a telephone conversation with President Hu Jintao of China.

October 21

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Senator John F. Kerry. He then traveled to Landover, MD, where he visited Metropolitan Archives. Later, at the Department of the Treasury, he attended a catastrophic earthquake tabletop exercise.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Newark, NJ.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

October 22

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Situation Room, he had a teleconference meeting with U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl W. Eikenberry. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Senator James H. Webb. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Senator Patrick J. Leahy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Betty E. King to be U.S. Representative to the Office of the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva, with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lillian A. Sparks to be Commissioner of the Administration for Native Americans at the Department of Health and Human Services.

October 23

In the morning, the President traveled to Boston, MA.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Cambridge, MA, where, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he toured two environmental research laboratories. Later, he traveled to Stamford, CT.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Caryn A. Wagner to be Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate Philip S. Goldberg to be Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Intelligence and Research at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate P. David Lopez to be General Counsel of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

October 24

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Nicolas Sarkozy of France to discuss the situation in Iran. Then, he had a telephone conversation with President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia to discuss the situation in Iran and Russia-U.S. relations.

The President declared an emergency in Puerto Rico and ordered Federal aid to

supplement Commonwealth and local response efforts in the area struck by explosions and fire beginning on October 23 and continuing.

October 25

In the afternoon, the President had separate telephone conversations with President Jalal Talabani and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq to express his condolences for the loss of life due to the suicide bombings in Baghdad.

October 26

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, in the Situation Room, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with their national security team to discuss the situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Jacksonville, FL. Then, at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, he met with Gold Star families. Later, he met with U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps personnel.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Miami, FL.

October 27

In the morning, the President traveled to Arcadia, FL.

In the afternoon, the President toured DeSoto Next Generation Solar Energy Center. He then traveled to Norfolk, VA. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Philip E. Coyle III to be Associate Director for National Security and International Affairs at the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lawrence G. Romo to be Director of the Selective Service System.

October 28

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Vice President Biden. Later, in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

Later in the afternoon, on the North Portico, the President participated in a commemorative tree planting ceremony.

In the evening, the President traveled to Dover, DE, arriving the following morning.

October 29

Later in the morning, at Dover Air Force Base, the President met with the families of 18 military and Drug Enforcement Administration personnel killed in Afghanistan. He then witnessed the dignified transfer of the deceased. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Senator Patrick J. Leahy. Later, also in the Oval Office, he participated in a bill signing ceremony for H.R. 621, the Girl Scouts USA Centennial Commemorative Coin Act. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

Later in the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with representatives of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, Congressional Black Caucus, Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus to discuss health care reform.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to the White House on December 7.

The President announced his intention to nominate Suresh Kumar to be Assistant Secretary for Trade Promotion and Director General of the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate James P. Lynch to be Director of the Bureau of Justice Statistics at the Department of Justice.

The President announced that he has nominated William M. Conley to be a judge on the

U.S. District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin.

The President announced that he has nominated Brian A. Jackson to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana.

October 30

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Situation Room, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff to discuss the situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Seretse Khama Ian Khama of Botswana to the Oval Office on November 5.

October 31

In the evening, on the North Portico, the President and Mrs. Obama greeted trick-or-treaters. Later, in the East Room, they hosted a Halloween reception for military families and the children of White House and Residence staff.

November 1

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., who briefed him on the situation in Afghanistan. Later, he traveled to Philadelphia, PA, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Camden, NJ. Later, he returned to Philadelphia, PA, and then traveled on to Newark, NJ. He then returned to Washington, DC.

November 2

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

November 3

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with His All Holiness, Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Senator Blanche L. Lincoln.

The President announced his intention to nominate Victoria A. Lipnic to be a Commissioner of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

November 4

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he participated in a credentialing ceremony for newly appointed Ambassadors to the U.S. He then traveled to Madison, WI, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had separate telephone conversations with Governor-elect Christopher J. Christie of New Jersey, Governor-elect Robert F. McDonnell of Virginia, Congressman-elect William L. Owens, and Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg of New York City to congratulate them on their election victories. He also left a message of congratulations for Congressman-elect John Garamendi.

The President announced that he has nominated Albert Diaz and James A. Wynn, Jr., to be judges on the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals.

The President announced that he has nominated John Gibbons to be U.S. marshal for the District of Massachusetts.

The President announced that he has nominated Robert W. Heun to be U.S. marshal for the District of Alaska.

November 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Vice President Joe Biden. Then, in the Oval Office, they

met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with representatives of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Adm. Michael G. Mullen, USN, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Lt. Gen. Robert W. Cone, commanding general, III Corps and Fort Hood, to discuss the shooting at Fort Hood.

In the evening, in the Oval Office, the President was briefed by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Adm. Michael G. Mullen, USN, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Robert S. Mueller III on the shooting at Fort Hood.

November 6

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing, in which he was briefed by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Adm. Michael G. Mullen, USN, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Robert S. Mueller III on the shooting at Fort Hood.

In the afternoon, the President visited Walter Reed Army Medical Center, where he met with wounded U.S. military personnel and their families and awarded two Purple Heart medals to military personnel. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Congressman-elect William L. Owens. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Berlin, Germany, to attend the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9:

Hillary Rodham Clinton (head of delegation);
Philip D. Murphy;
Brent Scowcroft;
Zbigniew Brzezinski; and
Craig Kennedy.

The President announced his intention to name Cassandra Q. Butts to be Senior Advisor to the Office of the Chief Executive Officer of the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

The President made additional disaster assistance available to North Dakota by authorizing an increase in the level of Federal funding for public assistant projects undertaken as a result of severe storms and flooding from the period of March 13 through August 10.

November 7

In the morning, at the Cannon House Office Building, the President addressed the House Democratic Caucus.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Camp David, MD.

November 8

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama returned to Washington, DC.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi, several House of Representatives leaders, AARP chief executive officer A. Barry Rand, American Nurses Association president Rebecca M. Patton, and American Medical Association Board of Trustees member Rebecca J. Patchin to discuss the passage of health care reform legislation.

November 9

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing, in which he was briefed on the investigation of the November 5 shooting at Fort Hood. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the State Dining Room, the President stopped by the United Jewish Communities reception.

In the evening, in the Oval Office, the President met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joshua Gotbaum to be Director of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Raul Perea-Henze to be Assistant Secretary of Policy and Planning at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The President announced his intention to nominate Carrie Hessler-Radelet to be Deputy Director of the U.S. Peace Corps.

The President announced his intention to nominate Eileen C. Donahoe to be U.S. Representative to the United Nations Human Rights Council, with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Laura E. Kennedy to be U.S. Representative to the Conference on Disarmament with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced that he will appoint the following individuals as members of the Ronald Reagan Centennial Commission:

Peggy Noonan;
John F.W. Rogers;
Frederick J. Ryan, Jr.; and
Fred W. Smith.

November 10

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Fort Hood, TX, where, at III Corps Headquarters, they met with the families of the victims of the November 5 shooting at Fort Hood.

In the afternoon, at III Corps Headquarters, the President and Mrs. Obama met with soldiers wounded in the November 5 shooting and their families. Later, at Darnall Army Medical Center, they met with soldiers wounded in the shooting. They then returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

The President announced his intention to nominate Erin C. Conaton to be Under Secretary of the Air Force.

The President announced his intention to nominate Cynthia L. Attwood to be a member of the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sandford Blitz to be Federal Cochair of the Northern Border Regional Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Douglas A. Criscitello to be Chief Financial Officer at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The President announced that he has nominated Rajiv Shah to be Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The President announced that he will appoint Emil Fish and Larry Pressler as members of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad.

November 11

In the morning, in the East Room, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a Veterans Day breakfast. Later, they traveled to Arlington, VA, where he participated in a Veterans Day wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery. They then visited Section 60 of the cemetery, where servicemembers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan are buried.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama returned to Washington, DC. Later, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with their national security team to discuss the situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

November 12

In the morning, the President traveled to Elmendorf Air Force Base, AK, arriving in the afternoon.

In the afternoon, the President met with the family of Cpl. Gregory M.W. Fleury, USMC, who was killed in Afghanistan on October 26. He then met with U.S. military personnel. Later, he traveled to Tokyo, Japan, arriving the following afternoon.

November 13

In the evening, the President traveled to the Kantei. Later, he had dinner with Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama of Japan. He then traveled to the Hotel Okura Tokyo.

The President announced his intention to nominate Walter C. Jones to be U.S. Executive Director of the African Development Bank.

The President announced his intention to nominate Leocadia I. Zak to be Director of the U.S. Trade and Development Agency.

The President announced that he has appointed Olivia Morgan as a member of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.

November 14

In the morning, the President traveled to Suntory Hall. Later, he returned to the Hotel Okura Tokyo, where he met with U.S. Embassy staff and their families. He then traveled to the Imperial Palace.

In the afternoon, the President had lunch with Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko of Japan. He then returned to the Hotel Okura Tokyo. Later, he traveled to Singapore, arriving in the evening.

Later in the evening, the President traveled to the Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore. He then traveled to Istana Palace, where he attended the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders' dinner. Later, he returned to the Shangri-La Hotel.

November 15

In the morning, the President met with U.S. Embassy staff and their families. Later, he participated in a working breakfast with several other world leaders to discuss climate change. He then traveled to Istana Palace, where he was greeted by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore.

Later in the morning, the President participated in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit retreat session.

In the afternoon, the President returned to the Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore. Later, he met with Prime Minister Abhisit Wechachiwa of Thailand.

In the evening, the President traveled to Shanghai, China. Upon arrival at Pudong International Airport, he traveled to the Portman Ritz-Carlton, Shanghai hotel, arriving the following morning.

November 16

Later in the morning, the President met with U.S. consulate staff and their families. He then traveled to the Xijiao State Guest Hotel, where he met with Party Secretary of the Shanghai Municipal Committee of the Communist Party of China Yu Zhengsheng and Mayor Han Zheng of Shanghai, China. Later, they had a working lunch.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the Shanghai Science and Technology Museum. Later, he traveled to Beijing, China. Upon arrival at Beijing Capital International Airport, he participated in a welcoming ceremony.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to the St. Regis Beijing hotel.

In the evening, the President traveled to the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse, where he was greeted by President Hu Jintao of China. He then met and had dinner with President Hu. Later, he returned to the St. Regis Beijing hotel.

The President announced his intention to nominate Julie Brill and Edith Ramirez to be Commissioners of the Federal Trade Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Scott H. DeLisi to be Ambassador to Nepal.

The President announced his intention to nominate Beatrice W. Welters to be Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago.

The President announced his intention to nominate Earl F. Gohl, Jr., to be Federal Cochair of the Appalachian Regional Commission.

November 17

In the morning, the President traveled to the Great Hall of the People, where he participated in a welcoming ceremony.

In the afternoon, the President returned to the St. Regis Beijing hotel. Later, he toured the Forbidden City. Following the tour, he signed the guest book at the Gate of Loyal Obedience.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to the U.S. Embassy, where he met with U.S. Embassy staff and their families. He then returned to the St. Regis Beijing hotel. Later, he returned to the Great Hall of the People, where he met with Chairman of the National People's Congress Wu Bangguo.

In the evening, the President attended a state dinner. Later, he returned to the St. Regis Beijing hotel.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert A. Petzel to be Under Secretary for Health at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The President announced his intention to nominate Arthur Elkins, Jr., to be Inspector General of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Nicole Y. Lamb-Hale to be Assistant Secretary for Manufacturing and Services at the Department of Commerce.

November 18

In the morning, the President participated in separate interviews with Chip Reid of CBS News, Chuck Todd of NBC News, Major Garrett of FOX News, and Ed Henry of CNN. Later, he traveled to the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse.

In the afternoon, the President had a working lunch with Premier Wen Jiabao of China. Later, he toured the Great Wall of China. He then traveled to Osan Air Base, South Korea, arriving in the evening.

Later in the evening, upon arrival at Osan Air Base, the President participated in a welcoming ceremony. He then traveled to Seoul, South Korea.

The President announced his intention to nominate Walter Isaacson to be Chair of the Broadcasting Board of Governors.

The President announced his intention to nominate the following individuals to be members of the Broadcasting Board of Governors:

Michael Lynton;
Susan McCue;
Michael P. Meehan;
Victor H. Ashe;
Dennis Mulhaupt;
Dana Perino; and
S. Enders Wimbush.

November 19

In the morning, the President met with U.S. Embassy staff and their families. Later, he traveled to the Blue House, where he participated in an arrival ceremony with President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea.

In the afternoon, the President had a working lunch with President Lee. He then traveled to Osan Air Base, South Korea. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, crossing the International Dateline and arriving in the afternoon.

The President announced his intention to nominate Elizabeth Littlefield to be President of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Harry K. Thomas, Jr., to be Ambassador to the Philippines.

The President announced his intention to nominate David Adelman to be Ambassador to Singapore.

November 20

The President announced his intention to nominate Mary S. Matiella to be Assistant Secretary for Financial Management at the Department of the Army.

The President announced his intention to nominate Paul L. Oostburg Sanz to be General Counsel of the Department of the Navy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Solomon B. Watson IV to be General Counsel of the Department of the Army.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kathleen S. Tighe to be Inspector General of the Department of Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Orlan Johnson to be Chair of the board of directors of the Securities Investor Protection Corporation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sharon Y. Bowen to be Vice-Chair of the board of directors of the Securities Investor Protection Corporation.

November 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Vice President Joe Biden. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

In the evening, in the Situation Room, the President and Vice President Biden met with

their national security team to discuss the situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

November 24

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

In the evening, on the North Portico, the President and Mrs. Obama greeted Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India and his wife Gursharan Kaur upon their arrival for a state dinner.

November 25

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, at Martha's Table, Inc., the President and Mrs. Obama and their daughters Sasha and Malia handed out Thanksgiving groceries to needy families.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Copenhagen, Denmark, on December 9 to participate in the United Nations Climate Change Conference.

November 26

In the morning, the President had Thanksgiving holiday telephone conversations with 10 U.S. servicemembers serving in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Persian Gulf.

November 27

The White House announced that the President will meet with Prime Minister Kevin M. Rudd of Australia at the White House on November 30.

November 30

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then had separate telephone conversations with President Nicolas Sarkozy of France and Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen of Denmark. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Prime Minister Kevin M. Rudd of Australia.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had an economic briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia, Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom, and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India to discuss U.S. policy regarding Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In the evening, the President had a video teleconference with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan to discuss U.S. policy regarding Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ian C. Kelly to be U.S. Representative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Allan J. Katz to be Ambassador to Portugal.

The President announced his intention to nominate Bisa Williams to be Ambassador to Niger.

The President announced his intention to nominate Raul H. Yzaguirre, Sr., to be Ambassador to the Dominican Republic.

The President announced his intention to nominate Patrick K. Nakamura to be a member of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission.

The President announced that he has nominated Willie L. Richardson, Jr., to be U.S. marshal for the Middle District of Georgia.

The President announced that he has nominated Christopher A. Crofts to be U.S. attorney for the District of Wyoming.

The President announced that he has nominated James L. Santelle to be U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Wisconsin.

The President announced that he has nominated Thomas G. Walker to be U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

The President announced that he has nominated Barbara L. McQuade to be U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan.

December 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an economic briefing. He then had separate telephone conversations with Prime Minister Donald Tusk of Poland, Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, and President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan to discuss U.S. policy regarding Afghanistan and Pakistan to discuss U.S. policy regarding Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Nobel Laureates and their families. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with congressional leadership to discuss U.S. policy regarding Afghanistan and Pakistan. Later, he traveled to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, NY, arriving in the evening.

Later in the evening, the President signed the U.S. Military Academy guest book. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael Khouri to be a member of the Federal Maritime Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate David Mills to be Assistant Secretary for Export Enforcement at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Douglas A. Rediker to be U.S. Alternate Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund Executive Board.

December 2

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Vice President Biden. Later, in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Senator Evan Bayh.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Senator Lindsey O. Graham.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Michel Sleiman of Lebanon to the White House on December 14.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rosemary A. DiCarlo to be Deputy Permanent U.S. Representative to the United Nations, with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Brooke D. Anderson to be U.S. Alternate Representative for Special Political Affairs to the United Nations, with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Douglas B. Wilson to be Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Malcolm Ross O'Neill to be Assistant Secretary for Acquisitions, Logistics, and Technology at the Department of the Army.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jackalyne Pfannenstiel to be Assistant Secretary for Installations and Environment at the Department of the Navy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Donald L. Cook to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs at the National Nuclear Security Administration.

December 3

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

The President declared a major disaster in Arkansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding beginning on October 29 and continuing.

December 4

In the morning, the President traveled to Allentown, PA, where he toured Allentown Metal Works, Inc.

In the afternoon, at the Hamilton Family Restaurant, the President had lunch with local business and government leaders. Later, he toured the Pennsylvania CareerLink of Lehigh Valley and met with workers and job seekers. He then visited the Nestle Purina PetCare Company plant, where he met with workers.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Judith Ann Stewart Stock to be Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

The President announced his intention to nominate David L. Strickland to be Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate William B. Sansom to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

The President announced that he has nominated Nancy D. Freudenthal to be a judge on the U.S. District Court of Wyoming.

The President announced that he has nominated D. Price Marshall, Jr., to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Arkansas.

The President announced that he has nominated Benita Y. Pearson to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio.

December 6

In the afternoon, at the Capitol, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with the Senate Democratic Caucus.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama attended the Kennedy Center Honors Gala at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

December 7

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey.

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President and Vice President Biden had a working lunch with Prime Minister Erdogan. Then, in the Map Room, he participated in an interview with Steve Kroft of CBS's "60 Minutes" program for later broadcast. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl W. Eikenberry and Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with former Vice President Albert R. Gore, Jr.

In the evening, on the State Floor, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a holiday reception for Members of Congress.

The President announced his intention to nominate David T. Matsuda to be Administrator of the Maritime Administration.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael P. Huerta to be Deputy Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration.

December 8

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

December 9

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Cabinet Room, they met with bipartisan Members of Congress to discuss efforts to strengthen the economy and create jobs.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with business and environmental leaders to discuss the Copenhagen conference.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Oslo, Norway, arriving the following morning.

The President announced his intention to nominate Patricia A. Hoffman to be Assistant Secretary for Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mari Del Carmen Aponte to be Ambassador to El Salvador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Donald E. Booth to be Ambassador to Ethiopia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Larry Persily to be Federal Coordinator for Alaska Natural Gas Transportation Projects.

The President declared a major disaster in Virginia and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding associated with Tropical Depression Ida beginning on November 11 and continuing.

December 10

In the morning, upon arrival at Oslo Airport Gardermoen, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the Norwegian Nobel Institute, where they attended the Nobel Prize guest book signing ceremony. Later, they traveled to the Prime Minister's Office, where they were greeted by Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg of Norway.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the Royal Palace, where they participated in an official photograph with King Harald V and Queen Sonja of Norway. They then had a private audience with the King and Queen. Later, they traveled to Oslo City Hall.

Later in the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the Grand Hotel.

In the evening, from the Grand Hotel balcony, the President and Mrs. Obama greeted Torch Parade participants. Later, upon arrival at the Nobel Banquet, they greeted King Harald V and Queen Sonja .

The President announced his intention to nominate Sharon E. Burke to be Director of Operational Energy Plans and Programs at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Marilyn A. Brown to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

The President announced his intention to nominate William C. Ostendorff to be a Commissioner of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The President declared a major disaster in Louisiana and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding from October 29 through November 3.

December 11

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama met with U.S. Embassy staff and their families. Later, they returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the afternoon.

December 13

During the day, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a holiday party.

December 14

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed of Bangladesh to discuss the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark. Later, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. He then had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia to discuss the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had lunch with Vice President Biden. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Senator Robert Casey, Jr.

In the evening, in the East Room, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a holiday party.

December 15

In the morning, the President had a video teleconference with Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom, Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, and President Nicolas Sarkozy of France to discuss the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark. He then traveled to Alexandria, VA. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with business leaders. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

During the day, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a holiday party.

December 16

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with U.S. Peace Corps Director Aaron S. Williams.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Chairwoman Inez Moore Tenenbaum. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with National Aeronautics and Space Administration Administrator Charles F. Bolden, Jr. He then had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Tillman Thomas of Grenada to discuss the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark. Later, on the State Floor, he and Mrs. Obama hosted a Hanukkah reception.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil to discuss the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen.

The President announced his intention to nominate Marie C. Johns to be Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gwendolyn E. Boyd and Peggy Goldwater Clay to be members of the Board of Trustees of the Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jonathan M. Young to be Chair of the National Council on Disability.

The President announced his intention to nominate the following individuals to be members of the National Council on Disability:

Carol Jean Reynolds;
Fernando Torres-Gil;
Chester A. Finn;
Gary Blumenthal;
Sara A. Gelser;
Ari Ne'eman; and
Dongwoo J. Pak.

The President declared a major disaster in Nebraska and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm on November 16 and 17.

December 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with members of the National Economic Council. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the evening, the President traveled to Copenhagen, Denmark, arriving the following morning.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kevin Wolf to be Assistant Secretary for Export Administration at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Timothy McGee to be Assistant Secretary for Observation and Prediction at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Theodore W. Tozer to be president of the Government National Mortgage Association at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate the following individuals to be members of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation: Sharon L. Browne, Charles N.W. Keckler, and Victor B. Maddox.

December 18

In the morning, upon arrival at Copenhagen Airport, Kastrup, the President traveled to the Bella Center. He then participated in a multilateral meeting with foreign leaders to discuss the United Nations Climate Change Conference. Later, he met with Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen of Denmark.

Later in the morning, the President met with Premier Wen Jiabao of China.

In the afternoon, the President participated in an official photograph with United Nations Climate Change Conference participants. He then greeted and met with foreign leaders during the convention luncheon. Later, he met with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil.

Later in the afternoon, the President participated in the afternoon plenary session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference.

In the evening, the President participated in a multilateral meeting with foreign leaders to discuss the United Nations Climate Change Conference. He then met with Premier Wen Jiabao of China. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving the following morning.

The President declared a major disaster in Alaska and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, mudslides, and rockslides from October 6 through 11.

December 20

In the afternoon, in the Diplomatic Reception Room, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a holiday party.

December 21

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with members of the National Economic Council. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with the winner of the Securing Americans Value and Efficiency (SAVE) Award, Nancy Fichtner.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a telephone interview with Tom Joyner of "The Tom Joyner Morning Show." Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

December 22

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a telephone interview with Steve Harvey of "The Steve Harvey Morning Show." Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with members of the National Economic Council.

The President announced his intention to nominate Beatrice A. Hanson to be Director of the Office for Victims of Crime at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate the following individuals to be members of the Board of Directors of the State Justice Institute:

Daniel J. Becker;
James R. Hannah;
Gayle A. Nachtigal; and
John B. Nalbandian.

The President announced that he has nominated J. Michelle Childs and Richard M. Gergel to be judges on the U.S. District Court for the District of South Carolina.

The President announced that he has nominated William N. Nettles to be U.S. attorney for the District of South Carolina.

The President announced that he has nominated Kelvin C. Washington to be U.S. marshal for the District of South Carolina.

The President declared a major disaster in Alabama and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by Tropical Storm Ida on November 9 and 10.

The President declared a major disaster in New Jersey and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding associated with Tropical Depression Ida and a nor'easter from November 11 through 15.

December 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in an interview with Julie Rovner and Robert Siegel of National Public Radio. Later, in the Map Room, he participated in an interview with Jim Lehrer of PBS's "PBS NewsHour."

The President announced that he has nominated Noel C. March to be U.S. marshal for the District of Maine.

The President announced that he has nominated George White to be U.S. marshal for the Southern District of Mississippi.

The President announced that he has nominated Andre Birotte, Jr., to be U.S. attorney for the Central District of California.

The President announced that he has nominated David A. Capp to be U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Indiana.

The President announced that he has nominated Richard S. Hartunian to be U.S. attorney for the Northern District of New York.

The President announced that he has nominated William J. Hochul, Jr., to be U.S. attorney for the Western District of New York.

The President announced that he has nominated Ronald C. Machen, Jr., to be U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia.

The President announced that he has nominated Anne M. Tompkins to be U.S. attorney for the Western District of North Carolina.

The President announced that he has nominated Sally Quillian Yates to be U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Georgia.

The President announced that he will appoint the following individuals as members of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board:

Roel C. Campos;
Lee H. Hamilton;
Rita E. Hauser;
Paul G. Kaminski;
Ellen Laipson;
Lester L. Lyles; and
Jami Miscik.

The President declared a major disaster in Kansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm from November 14 through 16.

December 24

In the morning, after the President was informed that the Senate passed H.R. 3590, the "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2009," he had separate telephone conversations with Victoria R. Kennedy, widow of Senator Edward M. Kennedy; David Turner of Little Rock, AR, who lost his health insurance earlier this year; and Senators Harry Reid, Christopher J. Dodd, Richard J. Durbin, John D. "Jay" Rockefeller IV, Max S. Baucus, Robert C. Byrd, Sherrod Brown, Charles E. Schumer, Thomas R. Harkin, Deborah A. Stabenow, Patty Murray, and Roland Burris. He then had Christmas holiday telephone conversations with 10 U.S. servicemembers serving in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Persian Gulf.

Later in the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama and their daughters Sasha and Malia traveled to Honolulu, HI, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama and Sasha and Malia traveled to Kailua, HI.

The President announced that he has nominated Timothy S. Black to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio.

The President announced that he has nominated Gloria M. Navarro to be a judge on the U.S. District Court for the District of Nevada.

December 25

In the morning, the President's military aide informed him of the attempted terrorist attack aboard Northwest Airlines Flight 253 during the plane's final approach at Detroit Metropolitan Airport. He then had a conference call briefing with Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Adviser John O. Brennan and National Security Council Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough. Later, he had a conference call briefing with national security officials and advisers.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, where, in the mess hall, they met with marines and their families. Later, they returned to Kailua, HI.

December 26

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a conference call briefing with Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Adviser John O. Brennan and National Security Council Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough to discuss the heightened air travel security measures that were put in place after the attempted terrorist attack aboard Northwest Airlines Flight 253 on December 25.

December 27

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then had a conference call briefing with Homeland Security and

Counterterrorism Adviser John O. Brennan and National Security Council Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough to discuss the progress of the investigation into the attempted terrorist attack aboard Northwest Airlines Flight 253 on December 25, the heightened air travel security measures put in place after the incident, and the reviews of terrorist watch list procedures and airport security detection capabilities.

Later in the morning, National Security Council Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough informed the President of a resolved nonterrorist incident aboard another Northwest Flight 253 that landed at Detroit Metropolitan Airport earlier in the day.

December 28

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a conference call briefing with Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr., Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano, and Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John O. Brennan to discuss the progress of the investigation into the attempted terrorist attack aboard Northwest Airlines Flight 253 on December 25 and the heightened air travel security measures put in place after the incident.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, where he was briefed by National Security Council Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough on the investigation into the December 25 attempted terrorist attack. Later, he returned to Kailua, HI.

December 29

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a conference call briefing with National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John O. Brennan, and Deputy National Security Adviser Thomas E. Donilon to discuss the progress of the investigation into the attempted terrorist attack aboard Northwest Airlines Flight 253 on December 25, the heightened air travel security measures put in place after the incident, and the reviews of terrorist watch list procedures and airport security detection capabilities.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay. He then returned to Kailua, HI.

During the day, the President met with National Security Council Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough to discuss the investigation into the December 25 attempted terrorist attack, the heightened air travel security measures put in place after the incident, and the reviews of terrorist watch list procedures and airport security detection capabilities.

December 30

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Central Intelligence Agency Director Leon E. Panetta to discuss the suicide bombing at Forward Operating Base Chapman in Khost Province, Afghanistan, and to express his condolences for the CIA personnel killed in the bombing.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John O. Brennan to discuss the suicide bombing at Forward Operating Base Chapman.

December 31

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had separate telephone conversations with Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John O. Brennan and Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano to discuss the progress of the investigation into the attempted terrorist attack aboard Northwest Airlines Flight 253 on December 25, the heightened air travel security measures put in place after the incident, the reviews of terrorist watch list procedures and airport security detection capabilities, and counterterrorism efforts.

During the day, the President had a conference call briefing with Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John O. Brennan and National Security Council Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough to discuss the progress of the investigation into the December 25 attempted terrorist attack, the heightened air travel security measures, and the

reviews of terrorist watch list procedures and airport security detection capabilities.

The President declared a major disaster in New York and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding associated with Tropical Depression Ida and a nor'easter from November 12 through 14.

The President declared a major disaster in Alabama and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding from December 12 through 18.

Appendix B—Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service Officers.

Submitted July 6

Jonathan S. Addleton,
of Georgia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Minister, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Mongolia.

Anthony Marion Babauta,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, vice Leslie M. Turner, resigned.

Rafael Borras,
of Maryland, to be Under Secretary for Management, Department of Homeland Security, vice Elaine C. Duke, resigned.

Gayleatha Beatrice Brown,
of New Jersey, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Burkina Faso.

Patricia D. Cahill,
of Missouri, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for a term expiring January 31, 2014, vice Cheryl Feldman Halpern, term expired.

George H. Cohen,
of Virginia, to be Federal Mediation and Conciliation Director, vice Arthur F. Rosenfeld, resigned.

Peggy E. Gustafson,
of Illinois, to be Inspector General, Small Business Administration, vice Eric M. Thorson.

Samuel D. Hamilton,
of Mississippi, to be Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, vice H. Dale Hall, resigned.

Jon M. Huntsman, Jr.,
of Utah, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the People's Republic of China.

Earl Michael Irving,
of California, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America the Kingdom of Swaziland.

Douglas W. Kmiec,
of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Malta.

Joseph A. Main,
of Virginia, to be Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health, vice Richard Stickler.

John M. McHugh,
of New York, to be Secretary of the Army, vice Preston M. Geren.

David H. Thorne,
of Massachusetts, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Italian Republic, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of San Marino.

Withdrawn July 6

Philip Mudd,
of Virginia, to be Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis, Department of Homeland

Security (new position), which was sent to the Senate on May 4, 2009.

Submitted July 7

Matthew Winthrop Barzun,
of Kentucky, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Sweden.

William Carlton Eacho III,
of Maryland, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Austria.

Alexander G. Garza,
of Missouri, to be Assistant Secretary for Health Affairs and Chief Medical Officer, Department of Homeland Security, vice Jeffrey William Runge.

Fay Hartog-Levin,
of Illinois, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Susan L. Kurland,
of Illinois, to be an Assistant Secretary of Transportation, vice Andrew B. Steinberg.

Patricia Newton Moller,
of Arkansas, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Guinea.

Michael H. Posner,
of New York, to be Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, vice David J. Kramer, resigned.

Alexa E. Posny,
of Kansas, to be Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education, vice Tracy Ralph Justesen.

Stephen J. Rapp,
of Iowa, to be Ambassador at Large for War Crimes Issues, vice John Clint Williamson, resigned.

Submitted July 8

Irene Cornelia Berger,
of West Virginia, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of West Virginia, vice David A. Faber, retired.

Roberto A. Lange,
of South Dakota, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of South Dakota, vice Charles B. Kornmann, retired.

Submitted July 9

Rolena Klahn Adorno,
of Connecticut, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2014, vice Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, term expired.

Craig Becker,
of Illinois, to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of 5 years expiring December 16, 2014 (reappointment).

Craig Becker,
of Illinois, to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of 5 years expiring December 16, 2009, vice Dennis P. Walsh.

Christopher P. Bertram,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Transportation, vice Phyllis F. Scheinberg, resigned.

Francis S. Collins,
of Maryland, to be Director of the National Institutes of Health, vice Elias Adam Zerhouni.

Sherry Glied,
of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services, vice Benjamin Eric Sasse, resigned.

Brian Hayes,
of Massachusetts, to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of 5 years expiring December 16, 2012, vice Robert J. Battista, term expired.

James A. Leach,
of Iowa, to be Chairperson of the National Endowment for the Humanities for a term of 4 years, vice Bruce Cole.

Philip D. Murphy,
of New Jersey, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mark Gaston Pearce,
of New York, to be a member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of 5 years expiring August 27, 2013, vice Peter N. Kirsanow.

Submitted July 13

Glyn T. Davies,
of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Representative of the United States of America to the Vienna Office of the United Nations, with the rank of Ambassador.

Glyn T. Davies,
of the District of Columbia, to be Representative of the United States of America to the International Atomic Energy Agency, with the rank of Ambassador.

Jonathan B. Jarvis,
of California, to be Director of the National Park Service, vice Mary Amelia Bomar, resigned.

Bryan Hayes Samuels,
of Illinois, to be Commissioner on Children, Youth, and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, vice Joan E. Ohl, resigned.

Submitted July 14

Dennis K. Burke,
of Arizona, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Arizona for the term of 4 years, vice Diane J. Humetewa.

Brenda Dann-Messier,
of Rhode Island, to be Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education, Department of Education, vice Troy R. Justesen.

Steven M. Dettelbach,
of Ohio, to be U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio for the term of 4 years, vice Gregory A. White, resigned.

Brendan V. Johnson,
of South Dakota, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of South Dakota for the term of 4 years, vice Martin J. Jackley.

Karen Louise Loeffler,
of Alaska, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Alaska for the term of 4 years, vice Timothy Mark Burgess, resigned.

Florence T. Nakakuni,
of Hawaii, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Hawaii for the term of 4 years, vice Edward Hachiro Kubo, Jr.

Carter M. Stewart,
of Ohio, to be U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio for the term of 4 years, vice Gregory Gordon Lockhart.

Aaron S. Williams,
of Virginia, to be Director of the Peace Corps, vice Ronald A. Tschetter, resigned.

Submitted July 15

Richard Serino,
of Massachusetts, to be Deputy Administrator and Chief Operating Officer, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, vice Harvey E. Johnson, Jr., resigned.

Submitted July 16

Jacqueline A. Berrien,
of New York, to be a member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for a term expiring July 1, 2014, vice Christine M. Griffin, term expired.

Anne S. Ferro,
of Maryland, to be Administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, vice John H. Hill, resigned.

Joseph G. Pizarchik,
of Pennsylvania, to be Director of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, vice Brent T. Wahlquist, resigned.

Kenneth Albert Spearman,
of Florida, to be a member of the Farm Credit Administration Board, Farm Credit Administration for a term expiring May 21, 2014, vice Nancy C. Pellett, term expired.

Submitted July 20

Daniel R. Elliott III,
of Ohio, to be a member of the Surface Transportation Board for a term expiring December 31, 2013, vice W. Douglas Buttrey, term expired.

Lee Andrew Feinstein,
of Virginia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Poland.

John R. Fernandez,
of Indiana, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development, vice Santanu K. Baruah, resigned.

Jose Antonio Garcia,
of Florida, to be Director of the Office of Minority Economic Impact, Department of Energy, vice Theresa Alvillar-Speake, resigned.

Gary S. Guzy,
of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Director of the Office of Environmental Quality (new position).

Robert D. Hormats,
of New York, to be an Under Secretary of State (Economic, Energy, and Agricultural Affairs), vice Reuben Jeffery III, resigned.

Marvin Krislov,
of Ohio, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2014, vice Celeste Colgan, term expired.

Jill Sommers,
of Kansas, to be a Commissioner of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission for a term expiring April 13, 2014 (reappointment).

Submitted July 22

Regina M. Benjamin,
of Alabama, to be Medical Director in the Regular Corps of the Public Health Service, subject to qualifications therefor as provided by law and regulations, and to be Surgeon General of the Public Health Service for a term of 4 years, vice Richard H. Carmona, term expired.

Alberto M. Fernandez,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Jeffrey Alan Goldstein,
of New York, to be an Under Secretary of the Treasury, vice Robert K. Steel, resigned.

Submitted July 23

Ketanji Brown Jackson,
of Maryland, to be a member of the U.S. Sentencing Commission for a term expiring

October 31, 2013, vice Michael E. Horowitz, term expired.

Submitted July 24

Dennis F. Hightower,
of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Secretary of Commerce, vice John J. Sullivan, resigned.

Submitted July 27

Alexander G. Garza,
of Missouri, to be Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security and Chief Medical Officer, Department of Homeland Security, vice Jeffrey William Runge.

Richard Serino,
of Massachusetts, to be Deputy Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, vice Harvey E. Johnson, Jr., resigned.

Kenneth Albert Spearman,
of Florida, to be a member of the Farm Credit Administration Board, Farm Credit Administration for the remainder of the term expiring May 21, 2010, vice Dallas Tonsager.

Kenneth Albert Spearman,
of Florida, to be a member of the Farm Credit Administration Board, Farm Credit Administration for a term expiring May 21, 2016 (reappointment).

Withdrawn July 27

Alexander G. Garza,
of Missouri, to be Assistant Secretary for Health Affairs and Chief Medical Officer, Department of Homeland Security, vice Jeffrey William Runge, which was sent to the Senate on July 7, 2009.

Richard Serino,
of Massachusetts, to be Deputy Administrator and Chief Operating Officer, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, vice Harvey E. Johnson, Jr., resigned, which was sent to the Senate on July 15, 2009.

Kenneth Albert Spearman,
of Florida, to be a member of the Farm Credit Administration Board, Farm Credit Administration for a term expiring May 21, 2014, vice Nancy C. Pellett, term expired, which was sent to the Senate on July 16, 2009.

Submitted July 28

Kelvin James Cochran,
of Louisiana, to be Administrator of the U.S. Fire Administration, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, vice Gregory B. Cade, resigned.

David S. Ferriero,
of North Carolina, to be Archivist of the U.S., vice Allen Weinstein, resigned.

Suedeen G. Kelly,
of New Mexico, to be a member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the term expiring June 30, 2014 (reappointment).

Mary Jo Wills,
of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Mauritius, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Seychelles.

Submitted July 29

Robert D. Hormats,
of New York, to be U.S. Alternate Governor of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for a term of 5 years; U.S. Alternate Governor of the Inter-American Development Bank for a term of 5 years; U.S. Alternate Governor of the African Development Bank for a term of 5 years; U.S. Alternate Governor of the African Development Fund; U.S. Alternate Governor of the Asian Development Bank; and U.S. Alternate Governor of the European Bank

for Reconstruction and Development, vice Reuben Jeffery III.

Submitted July 31

Edward M. Avalos,
of New Mexico, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Commodity Credit Corporation, vice Bruce I. Knight.

Daniel G. Bogden,
of Nevada, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Nevada for the term of 4 years, vice Gregory A. Brower.

Kevin W. Concannon,
of Maine, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Commodity Credit Corporation, vice Nancy Montanez-Johner.

Deborah K.R. Gilg,
of Nebraska, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Nebraska for the term of 4 years, vice Joe W. Stecher.

Susan Tsui Grundmann,
of Virginia, to be Chairman of the Merit Systems Protection Board, vice Neil McPhie.

Susan Tsui Grundmann,
of Virginia, to be member of the Merit Systems Protection Board for the term of 7 years expiring March 1, 2016, vice Neil McPhie, term expired.

Timothy J. Heaphy,
of Virginia, to be U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Virginia for the term of 4 years, vice John L. Brownlee.

Abdul K. Kallon,
of Alabama, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Alabama, vice U. W. Clemon, retired.

Kathleen A. Merrigan,
of Massachusetts, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Commodity Credit Corporation, vice Charles F. Conner.

James W. Miller,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Commodity Credit Corporation, vice Mark Everett Keenum.

Peter F. Neronha,
of Rhode Island, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Rhode Island for the term of 4 years, vice Robert Clark Corrente.

Jacqueline H. Nguyen,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Central District of California, vice Nora M. Manella, resigned.

Evan J. Segal,
of Pennsylvania, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Commodity Credit Corporation, vice Charles R. Christopherson, Jr.

Dallas P. Tonsager,
of South Dakota, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Commodity Credit Corporation, vice Thomas C. Dorr.

Anne Marie Wagner,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Merit Systems Protection Board for the term of 7 years expiring March 1, 2014, vice Barbara J. Sapin, resigned.

David Lyle Cargill, Jr.,
of New Hampshire, to be U.S. Marshal for the District of New Hampshire for the term of 4 years, vice Stephen Robert Monier.

David Edward Demag,
of Vermont, to be U.S. Marshal for the District of Vermont for the term of 4 years, vice John R. Edwards.

Genevieve Lynn May,
of Louisiana, to be U.S. Marshal for the Eastern District of Louisiana for the term of 4 years, vice Michael David Credo.

Submitted August 3

Anne M. Northup,
of Kentucky, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for a

term of 7 years from October 27, 2004, vice Saundra Brown Armstrong, resigned.

Daniel I. Werfel,
of Virginia, to be Controller, Office of Federal Financial Management, Office of Management and Budget, vice Linda Morrison Combs, resigned.

Terry A. Yonkers,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, vice William Anderson, resigned.

Submitted August 4

Marcia K. McNutt,
of California, to be Director of the U.S. Geological Survey, vice Mark Myers, resigned.

Submitted August 5

Frank Kendall III,
of Virginia, to be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology, vice James I. Finley, resigned.

David Morris Michaels,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor, vice Edwin G. Foulke, Jr.

Submitted August 6

Kenyen Ray Brown,
of Alabama, to be U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Alabama for the term of 4 years, vice Deborah Jean Johnson Rhodes, resigned.

Neil H. MacBride,
of Virginia, to be U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia for the term of 4 years, vice Charles P. Rosenberg, resigned.

Steven Gerard O'Donnell,
of Rhode Island, to be U.S. Marshal for the District of Rhode Island for the term of 4 years, vice Burton Stallwood.

Jane Branstetter Stranch,
of Tennessee, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit, vice Martha Craig Daughtrey, retired.

Benjamin B. Wagner,
of California, to be U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of California for the term of 4 years, vice McGregor William Scott, resigned.

Jim R. Esquea,
of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services, vice Vincent J. Ventimiglia, Jr., resigned.

Jose W. Fernandez,
of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Economic, Energy, and Business Affairs), vice Daniel S. Sullivan, resigned.

David C. Gompert,
of Virginia, to be Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence, vice Donald M. Kerr, resigned.

Robert James Grey, Jr.,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2011, vice Bernice Phillips, term expired.

William E. Kennard,
of the District of Columbia, to be Representative of the United States of America to the European Union, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

John Gerson Levi,
of Illinois, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2011, vice Herbert S. Garten, term expired.

Martha L. Minow,
of Illinois, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2011, vice David Hall, term expired.

Julie A. Reiskin,
of Colorado, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2010, vice Thomas R. Meites, term expired.

Alan D. Solomont,
of Massachusetts, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Spain, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Andorra.

Benjamin B. Tucker,
of New York, to be Deputy Director for State, Local, and Tribal Affairs, Office of National Drug Control Policy, vice Scott M. Burns.

Gloria Valencia-Weber,
of New Mexico, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2011, vice Sarah M. Singleton, term expired.

Edward Milton Chen,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of California, vice Martin J. Jenkins, resigned.

Dolly M. Gee,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Central District of California, vice George P. Schiavelli, resigned.

Richard Seeborg,
of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of California, vice Maxine M. Chesney, retired.

Thomas I. Vanaskie,
of Pennsylvania, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Third Circuit, vice Franklin S. Van Antwerpen, retired.

Submitted August 7

Barry B. White,
of Massachusetts, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Norway.

Submitted September 10

Scott D. O'Malia,
of Michigan, to be a Commissioner of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission for the remainder of the term expiring April 13, 2010, vice Walter Lukken, resigned.

Scott D. O'Malia,
of Michigan, to be a Commissioner of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission for a term expiring April 13, 2015 (reappointment).

Harris D. Sherman,
of California, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment, vice Mark Edward Rey, resigned.

Harris D. Sherman,
of California, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Commodity Credit Corporation, vice Mark Edward Rey.

Submitted September 14

Barbara J. Bennett,
of Virginia, to be Chief Financial Officer, Environmental Protection Agency, vice Lyons Gray, resigned.

Jeffrey L. Bleich,
of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Australia.

Barbara Short Haskew,
of Tennessee, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2014, vice Donald R. DePriest, resigned.

Eric L. Hirschhorn,
of Maryland, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Export Administration, vice Mario Mancuso, resigned.

Barbara Milano Keenan,
of Virginia, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Fourth Circuit, vice H. Emory Widener, Jr., retired.

Michael W. Punke,
of Montana, to be a Deputy U.S. Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador, vice Peter F. Allgeier, resigned.

Laurie O. Robinson,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Jeffrey Leigh Sedgwick, resigned.

Leslie V. Rowe,
of Washington, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Mozambique.

Submitted September 15

Frederick D. Barton,
of Maine, to be Representative of the United States of America on the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, with the rank of Ambassador.

Chai Rachel Feldblum,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for a term expiring July 1, 2013, vice Leslie Silverman, term expired.

Carmen Lomellin,
of Virginia, to be Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the Organization of American States, with the rank of Ambassador, vice Hector E. Morales, resigned.

Irvin M. Mayfield, Jr.,
of Louisiana, to be a member of the National Council on the Arts for a term expiring September 3, 2014, vice Jerry Pinkney, term expired.

Cynthia L. Quarterman,
of Georgia, to be Administrator of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, Department of Transportation, vice Carl T. Johnson.

Cynthia Stroum,
of Washington, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Luxembourg.

Submitted September 17

Ben S. Bernanke,
of New Jersey, to be Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for a term of 4 years (reappointment).

Michael J. Moore,
of Georgia, to be U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Georgia for the term of 4 years, vice Maxwell Wood.

Carmen Milagros Ortiz,
of Massachusetts, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Massachusetts for the term of 4 years, vice Michael J. Sullivan.

Erroll G. Southers,
of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security, vice Edmund S. Hawley, resigned.

Edward J. Tarver,
of Georgia, to be U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Georgia for the term of 4 years, vice Edmund A. Booth, Jr.

Submitted September 21

Gustavo Arnavat,
of New York, to be U.S. Executive Director of the Inter-American Development Bank for a term of 3 years, vice Miguel R. San Juan.

Arun Majumdar,
of California, to be Director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency—Energy, Department of Energy (new position).

Elizabeth M. Robinson,
of Virginia, to be Chief Financial Officer, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, vice Ronald Spoehel, resigned.

Daniel W. Yohannes,
of Colorado, to be Chief Executive Officer, Millennium Challenge Corporation, vice John J. Danilovich, resigned.

Submitted September 24

Frederick D. Barton,
of Maine, to be an Alternate Representative of the United States of America to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations, during his tenure of service as Representative of the United States of America on the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

Bill Delahunt,
of Massachusetts, to be a Representative of the United States of America to the Sixty-fourth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Elaine Schuster,
of Florida, to be Representative of the United States of America to the Sixty-fourth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Islam A. Siddiqui,
of Virginia, to be Chief Agricultural Negotiator, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador, vice Richard T. Crowder.

Christopher H. Smith,
of New Jersey, to be a Representative of the United States of America to the Sixty-fourth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Mary Burce Warlick,
of Virginia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Serbia.

Wellington E. Webb,
of Colorado, to be Alternate Representative of the United States of America to the Sixty-fourth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Jide J. Zeitlin,
of New York, to be Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations for U.N. Management and Reform, with the rank of Ambassador.

Jide J. Zeitlin,
of New York, to be Alternate Representative of the United States of America to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations during his tenure of service as Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations for U.N. Management and Reform.

Submitted September 25

Richard G. Callahan,
of Missouri, to be U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Missouri for the term of 4 years, vice Catherine Lucille Hanaway.

Michael W. Cotter,
of Montana, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Montana for the term of 4 years, vice William Walter Mercer.

Robert R. King,
of Virginia, to be Special Envoy on North Korean Human Rights Issues, with the rank of Ambassador.

Nicholas A. Klinefeldt,
of Iowa, to be U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Iowa for the term of 4 years, vice Matthew G. Whitaker.

Marisa Lago,
of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, vice Neel T. Kashkari, resigned.

Stephanie M. Rose,
of Iowa, to be U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Iowa for the term of 4 years, vice Charles W. Larson, Sr., resigned.

Laura Gore Ross,
of New York, to be Alternate Representative of the United States of America to the Sixty-fourth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Submitted September 29

Adele Logan Alexander,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the National Council on the Humanities for a term expiring January 26, 2014, vice Marguerite Sullivan, term expired.

Alan D. Bersin,
of California, to be Commissioner of Customs, Department of Homeland Security, vice W. Ralph Basham.

Gladys Commons,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Navy, vice Douglas A. Brook, resigned.

Victoria Angelica Espinel,
of the District of Columbia, to be Intellectual Property Enforcement Coordinator, Executive Office of the President (new position).

Steven L. Jacques,
of Kansas, to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, vice Cathy M. MacFarlane.

Michael C. Polt,
of Tennessee, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Estonia.

Harris D. Sherman,
of Colorado, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment, vice Mark Edward Rey, resigned.

Harris D. Sherman,
of Colorado, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Commodity Credit Corporation, vice Mark Edward Rey.

Withdrawn September 29

Harris D. Sherman,
of California, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment, vice Mark Edward Rey, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on September 10, 2009.

Harris D. Sherman,
of California, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Commodity Credit Corporation, vice Mark Edward Rey, which was sent to the Senate on September 10, 2009.

Submitted September 30

Louis B. Butler, Jr.,
of Wisconsin, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Wisconsin, vice John C. Shabaz, retired.

Sanford C. Coats,
of Oklahoma, to be U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Oklahoma for the term of 4 years, vice John Charles Richter, resigned.

John Leroy Kammerzell,
of Colorado, to be U.S. Marshal for the District of Colorado for the term of 4 years, vice Edward Zahren.

Mark Anthony Martinez,
of Nebraska, to be U.S. Marshal for the District of Nebraska for the term of 4 years, vice Brian Michael Ennis, resigned.

Mary Elizabeth Phillips,
of Missouri, to be U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Missouri for the term of 4 years, vice John Wood, resigned.

Stephen James Smith,
of Georgia, to be U.S. Marshal for the Southern District of Georgia for the term of 4 years, vice James Thomas Roberts, Jr.

Stephanie Villafuerte,
of Colorado, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Colorado for the term of 4 years, vice Troy A. Eid, resigned.

John F. Tefft,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Ukraine.

Submitted October 1

Carolyn W. Colvin,
of Maryland, to be Deputy Commissioner of Social Security for the term expiring January 19, 2013, vice Andrew G. Biggs, resigned.

Christine H. Fox,
of Virginia, to be Director of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation, Department of Defense (new position).

Roszell Hunter,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank of the U.S. for a term expiring January 20, 2013, vice J. Joseph Grandmaison, term expired.

Sara Manzano-Diaz,
of Pennsylvania, to be Director of the Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, vice Shinae Chun, resigned.

Paul K. Martin,
of Maryland, to be Inspector General, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, vice Robert Watson Cobb.

Mark R. Rosekind,
of California, to be a member of the National Transportation Safety Board for the remainder of the term expiring term expiring December 31, 2009, vice Kathryn Higgins, resigned.

Mark R. Rosekind,
of California, to be a member of the National Transportation Safety Board for a term expiring December 31, 2014 (reappointment).

Submitted October 5

Susan B. Carbon,
of New Hampshire, to be Director of the Violence Against Women Office, Department of Justice, vice Cynthia Dyer, resigned.

Charles Collyns,
of Maryland, to be a Deputy Under Secretary of the Treasury, vice Clay Lowery, resigned.

Patrick Alfred Corvington,
of Maryland, to be Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service, vice David Eisner.

Daniel I. Gordon,
of the District of Columbia, to be Administrator for Federal Procurement Policy, vice Paul A. Denett.

Pamela S. Hyde,
of New Mexico, to be Administrator of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Department of Health and Human Services, vice Terry L. Cline.

John H. Laub,
of the District of Columbia, to be Director of the National Institute of Justice, vice David W. Hagy, resigned.

Richard Sorian,
of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services, vice Christina H. Pearson, resigned.

James B. Warlick, Jr.,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Bulgaria.

Submitted October 6

Denny Chin,
of New York, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Second Circuit, vice Robert D. Sack, retired.

Mary John Miller,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, vice Anthony W. Ryan, resigned.

Michael F. Mundaca,
of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, vice Eric Solomon, resigned.

O. Rogeriee Thompson,
of Rhode Island, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the First Circuit, vice Bruce M. Selya, retired.

Submitted October 7

Patrick Gallagher,
of Maryland, to be Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology, vice William Alan Jeffrey.

Submitted October 8

David Huebner,
of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to New Zealand, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Samoa.

Neil G. McBride,
of Tennessee, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2013, vice Skila Harris, resigned.

David Daniel Nelson,
of Minnesota, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Oriental Republic of Uruguay.

Submitted October 13

George Apostolakis,
of Massachusetts, to be a member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the term of 5 years expiring June 30, 2014, vice Peter B. Lyons, term expired.

Elizabeth M. Harman,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, vice W. Ross Ashley III, resigned.

Eleni Tsakopoulos Kounalakis,
of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Hungary.

Sharon Jeanette Lubinski,
of Minnesota, to be U.S. Marshal for the District of Minnesota for the term of 4 years, vice Michael G. McGinn.

William D. Magwood IV,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the remainder of the term expiring June 30, 2010, vice Edward McGaffigan, Jr.

William D. Magwood IV,
of Maryland, to be member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the term of 5 years expiring June 30, 2015 (reappointment).

Rosanna Malouf Peterson,
of Washington, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Washington, vice Frederick L. Van Sickle, retired.

Peter Alan Prahar,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Federated States of Micronesia.

Christina Reiss,
of Vermont, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Vermont, vice John Garvan Murtha, retired.

Withdrawn October 13

Lorelei Boylan,
of New York, to be Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division, Department of Labor, vice Paul DeCamp, which was sent to the Senate on May 11, 2009.

Submitted October 15

Anne Slaughter Andrew,
of Indiana, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Costa Rica.

Joseph F. Bader,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board for

a term expiring October 18, 2012 (reappointment).

Charles P. Blahous III,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Hospital Insurance Trust Fund for a term of 4 years, vice Thomas R. Saving.

Charles P. Blahous III,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Supplementary Medical Insurance Trust Fund for a term of 4 years, vice Thomas R. Saving.

Charles P. Blahous III,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund and the Federal Disability Insurance Trust Fund for a term of 4 years, vice Thomas R. Saving.

Alan C. Kessler,
of Pennsylvania, to be a Governor of the U.S. Postal Service for a term expiring December 8, 2015 (reappointment).

Scott Boyer Quehl,
of Pennsylvania, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce, vice Otto Wolff, resigned.

Scott Boyer Quehl,
of Pennsylvania, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Commerce, vice Otto Wolff, resigned.

Robert D. Reischauer,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Hospital Insurance Trust Fund for a term of 4 years, vice John L. Palmer.

Robert D. Reischauer,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund and the Federal Disability Insurance Trust Fund for a term of 4 years, vice John L. Palmer.

Robert D. Reischauer,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Supplementary Medical Insurance Trust Fund for a term of 4 years, vice John L. Palmer.

Jessie Hill Roberson,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board for a term expiring October 18, 2013, vice A.J. Eggenberger, resigned.

Lynnae M. Ruttledge,
of Washington, to be Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration, Department of Education, vice Joanne M. Wilson, resigned.

Clifford L. Stanley,
of Pennsylvania, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, vice David S.C. Chu, resigned.

Jill Long Thompson,
of Indiana, to be a member of the Farm Credit Administration Board, Farm Credit Administration, for a term expiring May 21, 2014, vice Nancy C. Pellett, term expired.

Peter Stanley Winokur,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board for a term expiring October 18, 2014 (reappointment).

Submitted October 22

Betty E. King,
of New York, to be Representative of the United States of America to the Office of the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva, with the rank of Ambassador, vice Warren W. Tichenor, resigned.

Lillian A. Sparks,
of Maryland, to be Commissioner of the Administration for Native Americans, Department of Health and Human Services, vice Quanah Crossland Stamps, resigned.

Submitted October 26

Philip S. Goldberg,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Intelligence and Research), vice Randall M. Fort, resigned.

P. David Lopez,
of Arizona, to be General Counsel of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for a term of 4 years, vice Ronald S. Cooper, resigned.

Caryn A. Wagner,
of Virginia, to be Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis, Department of Homeland Security (new position).

Submitted October 28

Philip E. Coyle III,
of California, to be an Associate Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, vice Rosina M. Bierbaum.

Lawrence G. Romo,
of Texas, to be Director of Selective Service, vice William A. Chatfield, resigned.

Submitted October 29

William M. Conley,
of Wisconsin, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Wisconsin, vice Barbara B. Crabb, retired.

Brian Anthony Jackson,
of Louisiana, to be U.S. District Judge for the Middle District of Louisiana, vice Frank J. Polozola, retired.

Frank Kendall III,
of Virginia, to be Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (new position).

Suresh Kumar,
of New Jersey, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Director General of the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service, vice Israel Hernandez, resigned.

James P. Lynch,
of the District of Columbia, to be Director of the Bureau of Justice Statistics, vice Jeffrey L. Sedgwick, resigned.

Withdrawn October 29

Frank Kendall III,
of Virginia, to be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology, vice James I. Finley, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on August 5, 2009.

Submitted November 3

Victoria A. Lipnic,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for the remainder of the term expiring July 1, 2010, vice Naomi Churchill Earp.

Victoria A. Lipnic,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for a term expiring July 1, 2015 (reappointment).

Paul R. Verkuil,
of Florida, to be Chairman of the Administrative Conference of the U.S. for the term of 5 years, vice Thomasina V. Rogers, term expired.

Submitted November 4

Albert Diaz,
of North Carolina, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Fourth Circuit, vice William W. Wilkins, Jr., retired.

John Gibbons,
of Massachusetts, to be U.S. Marshal for the District of Massachusetts for the term of 4 years, vice Anthony Dichio.

Robert William Heun,
of Alaska, to be U.S. Marshal for the District of Alaska for the term of 4 years, vice Randy Merlin Johnson.

Grayling Grant Williams,
of Maryland, to be Director of the Office of Counternarcotics Enforcement, Department of

Homeland Security, vice Uttam Dhillon, resigned.

James A. Wynn, Jr.,
of North Carolina, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Fourth Circuit, vice James Dickson Phillips, Jr., retired.

Submitted November 10

Rajiv J. Shah,
of Washington, to be Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, vice Henrietta Holsman Fore, resigned.

Cynthia L. Attwood,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission for a term expiring April 27, 2013, vice W. Scott Railton, term expired.

Sandford Blitz,
of Maine, to be Federal Cochairperson of the Northern Border Regional Commission (new position).

Erin C. Conaton,
of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary of the Air Force, vice Ronald M. Sega, resigned.

Douglas A. Criscitello,
of Virginia, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Housing and Urban Development, vice John W. Cox, resigned.

Anthony R. Corscia,
of New Jersey, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of 5 years (new position).

Albert DiClemente,
of Delaware, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for the remainder of the term expiring July 26, 2011, vice R. Hunter Biden.

Submitted November 10

Rajiv J. Shah,
of Washington, to be Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, vice Henrietta Holsman Fore, resigned.

Cynthia L. Attwood,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission for a term expiring April 27, 2013, vice W. Scott Railton, term expired.

Sandford Blitz,
of Maine, to be Federal Cochairperson of the Northern Border Regional Commission (new position).

Erin C. Conaton,
of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary of the Air Force, vice Ronald M. Sega, resigned.

Douglas A. Criscitello,
of Virginia, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Housing and Urban Development, vice John W. Cox, resigned.

Anthony R. Corscia,
of New Jersey, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for a term of 5 years (new position).

Albert DiClemente,
of Delaware, to be a Director of the Amtrak Board of Directors for the remainder of the term expiring July 26, 2011, vice R. Hunter Biden.

Submitted November 16

Walter Crawford Jones,
of Maryland, to be U.S. Director of the African Development Bank for a term of 5 years, vice Mimi Alemayehou.

Ian Hoddy Solomon,
of Maryland, to be U.S. Executive Director of the International Bank for Reconstruction and

Development for a term of 2 years, vice Eli Whitney Debevoise II, term expired.

Leocadia Irine Zak,
of the District of Columbia, to be Director of the Trade and Development Agency, vice Larry Woodrow Walther, resigned.

Submitted November 17

Julie Simone Brill,
of Vermont, to be a Federal Trade Commissioner for the term of 7 years from September 26, 2009, vice Pamela Harbour, term expired.

Scott H. DeLisi,
of Minnesota, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Nepal.

Earl F. Gohl, Jr.,
of the District of Columbia, to be Federal Cochairman of the Appalachian Regional Commission, vice Anne B. Pope, resigned.

Edith Ramirez,
of California, to be a Federal Trade Commissioner for the term of 7 years from September 26, 2008, vice Deborah P. Majoras, term expired.

Beatrice Wilkinson Welters,
of Virginia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Trinidad and Tobago.

Submitted November 18

Arthur Allen Elkins, Jr.,
of Maryland, to be Inspector General, Environmental Protection Agency, vice Nikki Rush Tinsley, resigned.

Nicole Yvette Lamb-Hale,
of Michigan, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce, vice William G. Sutton, resigned.

Robert A. Petzel,
of Minnesota, to be Under Secretary for Health of the Department of Veterans Affairs, vice Michael J. Kussman, resigned.

Submitted November 19

Victor H. Ashe,
of Tennessee, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2010, vice James K. Glassman, resigned.

Walter Isaacson,
of Louisiana, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2012, vice Steven J. Simmons, term expired.

Walter Isaacson,
of Louisiana, to be Chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, vice James K. Glassman, resigned.

Michael Lynton,
of California, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2012, vice Mark McKinnon, term expired.

Susan McCue,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2011, vice Joaquin F. Blaya, term expired.

Michael P. Meehan,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2010, vice D. Jeffrey Hirschberg, term expired.

Dennis Mulhaupt,
of California, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2011, vice Blanquita Walsh Cullum, term expired.

Dana M. Perino,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term

expiring August 13, 2012, vice Edward E. Kaufman, resigned.

S. Enders Wimbush,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors for a term expiring August 13, 2010, vice Norman J. Pattiz, term expired.

Submitted November 20

David Adelman,
of Georgia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Singapore.

Sharon Y. Bowen,
of New York, to be a Director of the Securities Investor Protection Corporation for a term expiring December 31, 2012, vice Todd S. Farha.

Orlan Johnson,
of Maryland, to be a Director of the Securities Investor Protection Corporation for a term expiring December 31, 2011, vice Armando J. Bucelo, Jr., term expired.

Elizabeth L. Littlefield,
of the District of Columbia, to be President of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, vice Robert A. Mosbacher, resigned.

Mary Sally Matiella,
of Arizona, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army, vice Nelson M. Ford.

Paul Luis Oostburg Sanz,
of Maryland, to be General Counsel of the Department of the Navy, vice Frank R. Jimenez.

Harry K. Thomas, Jr.,
of New York, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of the Philippines.

Kathleen S. Tighe,
of Virginia, to be Inspector General, Department of Education, vice John Portman Higgins, resigned.

Solomon B. Watson IV,
of New York, to be General Counsel of the Department of the Army, vice Benedict S. Cohen, resigned.

Submitted November 30

Christopher A. Crofts,
of Wyoming, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Wyoming for the term of 4 years, vice Kelly Harrison Rankin.

Allan J. Katz,
of Florida, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Portuguese Republic.

Ian C. Kelly,
of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be U.S. Representative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, with the rank of Ambassador.

Barbara L. McQuade,
of Michigan, to be U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan for the term of 4 years, vice Stephen Joseph Murphy III, resigned.

Patrick K. Nakamura,
of Alabama, to be a member of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission for a term of 6 years expiring August 30, 2010, vice Robert H. Beatty, Jr., term expired.

Patrick K. Nakamura,
of Alabama, to be a member of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission for a term of 6 years expiring August 30, 2016 (reappointment).

Willie Lee Richardson, Jr.,
of Georgia, to be U.S. Marshal for the Middle District of Georgia for the term of 4 years, vice Theresa A. Merrow, resigned.

James L. Santelle,
of Wisconsin, to be U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Wisconsin for the term of 4 years, vice Steven M. Biskupic, resigned.

Thomas Gray Walker,
of North Carolina, to be U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina for the term of 4 years, vice George E.B. Holding.

Bisa Williams,
of New Jersey, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Niger.

Raul Yzaguirre,
of Maryland, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Dominican Republic.

Submitted December 2

Michael A. Khouri,
of Kentucky, to be a Federal Maritime Commissioner for a term expiring June 30, 2011, vice Steven Robert Blust, resigned.

David W. Mills,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce, vice Darryl W. Jackson, resigned.

Douglas A. Rediker,
of Massachusetts, to be U.S. Alternate Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund for a term of 2 years, vice Daniel D. Heath, term expired.

Submitted December 3

Brooke D. Anderson,
of California, to be Alternate Representative of the United States of America for Special Political Affairs in the United Nations, with the rank of Ambassador.

Brooke D. Anderson,
of California, to be an Alternate Representative of the United States of America to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations, during her tenure of service as Alternate Representative of the United States of America for Special Political Affairs in the United Nations.

Donald L. Cook,
of Washington, to be Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs, National Nuclear Security Administration, vice Robert L. Smolen, resigned.

Rosemary Anne DiCarlo,
of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be the Deputy Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, and the Deputy Representative of the United States of America in the Security Council of the United Nations.

Rosemary Anne DiCarlo,
of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Representative of the United States of America to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations, during her tenure of service as Deputy Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations.

Nancy D. Freudenthal,
of Wyoming, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Wyoming, vice Clarence A. Brimmer, Jr., retired.

Denzil Price Marshall, Jr.,
of Arkansas, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Arkansas, vice William Roy Wilson, Jr., retired.

Malcolm Ross O'Neill,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army, vice Claude M. Bolton, Jr.

Jackalyne Pfannenstiel,
of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Navy, vice Buddie J. Penn.

Benita Y. Pearson,
of Ohio, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Ohio, vice Peter C. Economus, retired.

Douglas B. Wilson,
of Arizona, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Dorrance Smith.

Submitted December 4

William B. Sansom,
of Tennessee, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2014 (reappointment).

Judith Ann Stewart Stock,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Educational and Cultural Affairs), vice Goli Ameri, resigned.

David L. Strickland,
of Georgia, to be Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, vice Nicole R. Nason, resigned.

Submitted December 8

Michael Peter Huerta,
of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration, vice Robert A. Sturgell, resigned.

Submitted December 9

Mari Carmen Aponte,
of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of El Salvador.

Donald E. Booth,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Patricia A. Hoffman,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability), vice Kevin M. Kolevar, resigned.

Larry Persily,
of Alaska, to be Federal Coordinator for Alaska Natural Gas Transportation Projects for the term prescribed by law, vice Drue Pearce, resigned.

Submitted December 11

Marilyn A. Brown,
of Georgia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority for a term expiring May 18, 2012, vice Susan Richardson Williams, term expired.

Sharon E. Burke,
of Maryland, to be Director of Operational Energy Plans and Programs (new position).

William Charles Ostendorff,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the remainder of the term expiring June 30, 2011, vice Dale Klein, resigned.

Submitted December 17

Gary Blumenthal,
of Massachusetts, to be a member of the National Council on Disability for a term expiring September 17, 2010, vice Anne Rader, term expired.

Gwendolyn E. Boyd,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation for a term expiring August 11, 2014, vice Donald J. Sutherland, term expired.

Chester Alonzo Finn,
of New York, to be a member of the National Council on Disability for a term expiring

September 17, 2012, vice Kathleen Martinez, term expired.

Sara A. Gelser,
of Oregon, to be a member of the National Council on Disability for a term expiring September 17, 2011, vice Patricia Pound, term expired.

Peggy Goldwater-Clay,
of California, to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation for a term expiring June 5, 2012 (reappointment).

Marie Collins Johns,
of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration, vice Jovita Carranza, resigned.

David T. Matsuda,
of the District of Columbia, to be Administrator of the Maritime Administration, vice Sean T. Connaughton, resigned.

Ari Ne'eman,
of Maryland, to be a member of the National Council on Disability for a term expiring September 17, 2012, vice Robert Davila, term expired.

Dongwoo Joseph Pak,
of California, to be a member of the National Council on Disability for a term expiring September 17, 2012, vice Tony J. Williams, term expired.

Carol Jean Reynolds,
of Colorado, to be a member of the National Council on Disability for a term expiring September 17, 2010, vice Lisa Mattheiss, term expired.

Fernando Torres-Gill,
of California, to be a member of the National Council on Disability for a term expiring September 17, 2011, vice Graham Hill, term expired.

Jonathan M. Young,
of Maryland, to be a member of the National Council on Disability for a term expiring September 17, 2012, vice Katherine O. McCary, term expired.

Submitted December 21

Sharon L. Browne,
of California, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2010, vice Michael McKay, term expired.

Charles Norman Wiltse Keckler,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2010, vice Frank B. Strickland, term expired.

Victor B. Maddox,
of Kentucky, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2010, vice Lillian R. BeVier, term expired.

Timothy McGee,
of Louisiana, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce, vice Phillip A. Singerman.

Theodore W. Tozer,
of Ohio, to be President, Government National Mortgage Association, vice Joseph J. Murin, resigned.

Kevin Wolf,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce, vice Christopher R. Wall, resigned.

Submitted December 22

J. Michelle Childs,
of South Carolina, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of South Carolina, vice George Ross Anderson, Jr., retired.

Richard Mark Gergel,
of South Carolina, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of South Carolina, vice Henry M. Herlong, Jr., retired.

William N. Nettles,
of South Carolina, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of South Carolina for the term of 4 years, vice William Walter Wilkins III.

Kelvin Corneilius Washington,
of South Carolina, to be U.S. Marshal for the District of South Carolina for the term of 4 years, vice Johnny Mack Brown.

Submitted December 23

Daniel J. Becker,
of Utah, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the State Justice Institute for a term expiring September 17, 2010, vice Robert Nelson Baldwin, term expired.

Andre Birotte, Jr.,
of California, to be U.S. Attorney for the Central District of California for the term of 4 years, vice Thomas P. O'Brien.

David A. Capp,
of Indiana, to be U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Indiana for the term of 4 years, vice Joseph S. Van Bokkelen.

James R. Hannah,
of Arkansas, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the State Justice Institute for a term expiring September 17, 2010, vice Joseph Francis Baca, term expired.

Beatrice A. Hanson,
of New York, to be Director of the Office for Victims of Crime, vice John W. Gillis.

Richard S. Hartunian,
of New York, to be U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of New York for the term of 4 years, vice Glenn T. Suddaby, resigned.

William Joseph Hochul, Jr.,
of New York, to be U.S. Attorney for the Western District of New York for the term of 4 years, vice Terrance P. Flynn, resigned.

Ronald C. Machen, Jr.,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia for the term of 4 years, vice Kenneth L. Wainstein, resigned.

Noel Culver March,
of Maine, to be U.S. Marshal for the District of Maine for the term of 4 years, vice David Donald Viles.

Gayle A. Nachtigal,
of Oregon, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the State Justice Institute for a term expiring September 17, 2012, vice Sophia H. Hall, term expired.

John B. Nalbandian,
of Kentucky, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the State Justice Institute for a term expiring September 17, 2010, vice Keith McNamara, term expired.

Anne M. Tompkins,
of North Carolina, to be U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina for the term of 4 years, vice Gretchen C.F. Shappert, resigned.

George White,
of Mississippi, to be U.S. Marshal for the Southern District of Mississippi for the term of 4 years, vice Nehemiah Flowers.

Sally Quillian Yates,
of Georgia, to be U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Georgia for the term of 4 years, vice David E. Nahmias, resigned.

Withdrawn December 23

Suedeen G. Kelly,
of New Mexico, to be a member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the term expiring June 30, 2014 (reappointment), which was sent to the Senate on July 28, 2009.

Submitted December 24

Timothy S. Black,
of Ohio, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Ohio, vice Sandra S. Beckwith, retired.

Gloria M. Navarro,
of Nevada, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Nevada, vice Brian Edward Sandoval, resigned.

Appendix C—Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released July 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Denis R. McDonough, Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Michael Froman, Senior Director for African Affairs Michelle Gavin, and Senior Director for Russian and Eurasian Affairs Michael McFaul on the President's visits to Russia, Italy, and Africa

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Signs Bill Awarding Congressional Gold Medal to Women Airforce Service Pilots

Statement by the Press Secretary: Declassification Policy Forum to Launch This Week

Statement by the Press Secretary on the situation in Niger

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1777 and S. 614

Advance text of the President's opening remarks at a virtual town hall and question-and-answer session on health care reform in Annandale, VA

Released July 2

Transcript of a press briefing by Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Illinois

Released July 6

Statement by the Press Secretary on the situation in western China

Fact sheet: Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Field of Public Health and Medical Sciences

Fact sheet: U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs

Fact sheet: U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission

Fact sheet: United States-Russia Military Transit Agreement

Fact sheet: United States-Russia Military to Military Relations

Fact Sheet: The Joint Understanding for the START Follow-on Treaty

Fact sheet: Moscow Summit, July 6–8

Transcript of the President's interview with Russia's Novaya Gazeta

Released July 7

Advance text of the President's remarks at a graduation ceremony at the New Economic School in Moscow, Russia

Released July 8

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Michael Froman

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Michael Froman and U.S. Special Envoy for Climate Change Todd Stern

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Denis R. McDonough, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns, Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Michael Froman, and National Security Council Chief of Staff Mark Lippert on the G–8 working dinner

Statement by the Press Secretary: Addressing the Nuclear Threat: Fulfilling the Promise of Prague at the L'Aquila Summit

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's visit to the L'Aquila earthquake zone with Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy

Fact sheet: The G–8 Meeting at L'Aquila

Text: Background on Today's Health Care Announcement

Released July 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs, Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Denis R. McDonough, and Senior Director for African Affairs Michelle Gavin

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Michael Froman and U.S. Special Envoy for Climate Change Todd Stern

Transcript of a readout by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs on the President's meeting with President Luiz Ignacio Lula da Silva of Brazil

Fact sheet: Meeting the International Clean Energy and Climate Change Challenges

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Honors Outstanding Science, Math, Engineering Teachers, and Mentors

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Honors Outstanding Early-Career Scientists

Joint statement by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and a spokesperson for Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom on President Obama's meeting with the Prime Minister

Released July 10

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Denis R. McDonough

Statement by the Press Secretary: Food Security: Investing in Agriculture Development To Reduce Hunger and Poverty

Statement by the Press Secretary: Examples of What U.S. Embassies in Africa are Doing To Engage African Public on the President's Ghana Speech

Statement by the Press Secretary: Obama Administration Officials Highlight Energy Efficiency Upgrades

Joint statement by President Barack Obama, President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia, and President Nicolas Sarkozy of France on the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

Released July 11

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines to the White House on July 30

Advance text of the President's remarks to the Ghanaian Parliament in Accra, Ghana

Released July 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Council of Economic Advisers Release Report on Jobs of the Future

Statement by the Press Secretary: Republican Recovery Act Claims Disputed

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces Next Steps in Development of Urban and Metropolitan Agenda

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Tennessee

Advance text of Judge Sonia M. Sotomayor's opening statement before the Senate Judiciary Committee

Released July 14

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Fact sheet: The American Graduation Initiative: Stronger American Skills Through Community Colleges

Excerpts of the President's remarks at Macomb Community College in Warren, MI

Advance text of the President's remarks at Macomb Community College in Warren, MI

Released July 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy Judith A. McHale

Statement by the Press Secretary: National Economic Council Director Lawrence H. Summers To Deliver Remarks on the Economy

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq to the White House on July 22

Advance text of the President's remarks on health care reform

Released July 16

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Advance text of the President's remarks at a dinner celebrating the 100th anniversary of the NAACP

Released July 17

Excerpts of remarks by National Economic Council Director Lawrence H. Summers to the Peterson Institute for International Economics

Transcript of remarks by National Economic Council Director Lawrence H. Summers to the Peterson Institute for International Economics

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's travel to Guadalajara, Mexico, August 9–10, to attend the North American Leaders Summit

Released July 20

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released July 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs (dated July 21)

Excerpts of the President's opening remarks at a news conference

Advance text of the President's opening remarks at a news conference

Advance text of remarks by White House Office of Management and Budget Director Peter R. Orszag to the Council of Foreign Relations in New York City

Released July 23

Transcripts of press gaggles by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Advance text of the President's opening remarks at a town hall meeting in Shaker Heights, OH

Released July 24

Transcript of the press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Statement from former President George H.W. Bush on the Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act

Statement by the Press Secretary: Cabinet Members Publish Energy Op-Eds in Regional Papers

Released July 25

Statement by the Press Secretary: CEA Releases Report on the Economic Effects of Health Care Reform on Small Businesses and Their Employees (dated July 24)

Released July 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Advance text of the President's remarks at the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue

Released July 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that on July 27 the President signed H.R. 2632

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.J. Res. 56

Released July 29

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Advance text of the President's opening remarks at a town hall meeting in Raleigh, NC

Advance text of the President's opening remarks at a town hall meeting in Bristol, VA

Released July 30

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Names Medal of Freedom Recipients

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama To Celebrate Educational Benefits for Post 9/11 Service Members

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Maine

Released July 31

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the death of former President Corazon Aquino of the Philippines

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 1513

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Nebraska

Released August 3

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Supporting Our Troops: The Post 9/11 GI Bill

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of President Hosni Mohamed Mubarak of Egypt to the White House

Released August 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of former President William J. Clinton to North Korea

Released August 5

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces $2.4 Billion in Grants To Accelerate the Manufacturing and Deployment of the Next Generation of U.S. Batteries and Electric Vehicles

Released August 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of an essay by Dr. Jill Biden published in Forbes magazine

Advance text of remarks by Council of Economic Advisers Chair Christina D. Romer at the Economic Club of Washington, DC

Advance text of remarks by Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John O. Brennan at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC

Released August 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a press briefing by National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Michael Froman, National Security Council Senior Director of Western Affairs Daniel Restrepo, and Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John O. Brennan

Statement by the Press Secretary: Obama Administration Officials Travel America, Talk Clean Energy Economy

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada to the White House

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President has signed H.R. 2245, H.R. 3114, and H.R. 3435

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President has signed H.R. 3357

Released August 9

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Transcript of a background briefing by a senior administration official on the President's

meeting with President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico

Released August 10

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary: North American Leaders Summit: Energy Deliverables

Released August 11

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released August 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Obama Administration's Rural Stops in Western Alaska

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 838 and S. 1107

Released August 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's authorization on the continuance of the Air Bridge Denial (ABD) Program against civil aircraft trafficking in illicit drugs

Statement by the Press Secretary on export control regulations

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Iowa

Released August 14

Statement by the Press Secretary on the appointment of two senior officials responsible for Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Kentucky

Advance text of the President's opening remarks at a town hall meeting in Belgrade, MT

Released August 15

Transcript of press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Advance text of the President's opening remarks at a town hall meeting in Grand Junction, CO

Released August 17

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the release of John Yettaw, who was held by Burmese authorities for entering the home of Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma

Advance text of the President's remarks to the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Phoenix, AZ

Released August 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the meeting between President Obama and former President William J. Clinton

Released August 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released August 20

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the release of Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi

Released August 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces National HIV/AIDS Community Discussions

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Tennessee

Released August 23

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Released August 24

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary: President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology (PCAST) releases report assessing H1N1 preparations

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Department of Justice Inquiry

Released August 25

Advance text of the President's remarks on the reappointment of Ben S. Bernanke as Chairman of the Federal Reserve in Oak Bluffs, MA

Released August 26

Statement by the Press Secretary on the death of Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq Chairman Abdul Aziz al-Hakim

Text of a statement by National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr. on the passing of Senator Edward M. Kennedy

Released August 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Released August 29

Advance text of the President's eulogy at the funeral service for Senator Edward M. Kennedy in Boston, MA

Released August 30

Statement by the Press Secretary on parliamentary elections in Japan

Released August 31

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released September 1

Statement by the Press Secretary: 2009–H1N1 National Preparedness and Response Overview

Statement by the Press Secretary on the meeting between National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., and Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski of Poland

Statement by the Press Secretary on the attack on Assistant Minister of Interior Muhammad Bin Nayif of Saudi Arabia

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to New York

Released September 4

Statement by the Press Secretary on the disclosure policy for White House visitor logs

Statement by the Press Secretary on Israeli settlements

Released September 7

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Advance text of the President's remarks at the AFL–CIO Labor Day picnic in Cincinnati, OH

Advance text of the President's speech to the Nation's school students/Back to School Event

Released September 8

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released September 9

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Excerpts of the President's address before a joint session of Congress on health care reform

Advance text of the President's address before a joint session of Congress on health care reform

Text: Guest list for the First Lady's Box at the address to a joint session of the Congress

Text: Letter from Senator Edward M. Kennedy to the President dated May 12, 2009

Released September 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Council of Economic Advisers Releases Report to Congress on the Economic Impact of the Recovery Act

Statement by the Press Secretary on the meeting between President Obama and Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nanyan of Abu Dhabi

Released September 11

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama To Hold Presidential Forum on Service Hosted by Former President George H.W. Bush

Statement by the Press Secretary on the First Lady's visit to Copenhagen, Demark to represent the U.S. in support of Chicago's bid for the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games

Statement by the Press Secretary on the remedy to address market disruption from imports of certain passenger vehicle and light truck tires

Released September 12

Advance text of the President's remarks in Minneapolis, MN

Released September 14

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the passing of Press Secretary to President Carter Jody Powell

Advance text of the President's remarks in New York City

Released September 15

Transcript of a press gaggle by Senator Sherrod Brown and Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Transcript of a press briefing by Secretary of Transportation Raymond H. LaHood and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama To Award Medal of Honor to Sergeant First Class Jared C. Monti

Statement by the Press Secretary on the U.S. delegation to the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

Advance text of the President's remarks to General Motors employees in Lordstown, OH

Advance text of the President's remarks at the AFL–CIO National Convention in Pittsburgh, PA

Released September 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released September 17

Transcript of press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Announces Plan to Expand Fight Against Global H1N1 Pandemic

Fact sheet: U.S. Missile Defense

Fact sheet: Patient Safety and Medical Liability Reform Demonstration

Released September 18

Transcript of press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and U.S. Permanent Representative to the U.N. Susan E. Rice

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's upcoming meeting with Prime Minister Taro Aso of Japan

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of President Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero of Spain to the White House

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3325 and S.J. Res. 9

Excerpts of remarks by National Economic Council Director Lawrence H. Summers at the McDonough School of Business at Georgetown University

Released September 19

Statement by the Press Secretary on a trilateral meeting with President Obama, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, and President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority

Released September 21

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Lays Out Strategy for American Innovation

Advance text of the President's remarks at Hudson Valley Community College in Troy, NY

Released September 22

Transcript of a press briefing by U.S. Special Envoy for Climate Change Todd Stern, Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Michael Froman, and Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change Carol Browner

Transcript of a press briefing by U.N. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell on the President's meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority

Transcript of a press briefing by Senior Director for African Affairs Michelle Gavin on the President's lunch with sub-Saharan African heads of state

Transcript of a background briefing by a senior administration official on the President's meeting with President Hu Jintao of China

Advance text of the President's remarks at the United Nations Climate Change Summit in New York City

Released September 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and White House Speechwriter Ben Rhodes

Transcript of a press briefing by National Security Council Coordinator for Arms Control and Nonproliferation Gary Samore, U.S. Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Alex Wolff, and Senior Director for Russian Affairs Michael McFaul on the President's meeting with President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's participation in the Friends of Democratic Pakistan Summit in New York City

Advance text of the President's remarks to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City

Released September 24

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a press briefing by Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner on the G–20 summit

Statement by the Press Secretary: A Green Summit: Background on the Pittsburgh Summit, September 24–25, 2009

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Georgia

Fact sheet: United Nations Security Council Summit on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Nuclear Disarmament UNSC Resolution 1887

Fact sheet: Creating a 21st Century International Economic Architecture

Advance text of the President's remarks at a Friends of Democratic Pakistan Summit in New York City

Released September 25

Transcript of a background briefing by senior administration officials on an Iranian nuclear facility

Joint statement by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and a spokesperson for Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom on President Obama's meeting with the Prime Minister

Fact sheet: The Pittsburgh Summit: Key Accomplishments

Fact sheet: The Pittsburgh Summit: Creating a 21st Century International Economic Architecture

Fact sheet: The Pittsburgh Summit: Framework for Strong, Sustainable, and balanced Growth

Fact sheet: The Pittsburgh Summit: Bold and Coordinated Actions from Crisis to Recovery

Fact sheet: The Pittsburgh Summit: Partnering on Food Security

Fact sheet: The Pittsburgh Summit: Acting on Our Global Energy and Climate Change Challenges

Fact sheet: The Pittsburgh Summit: Support for the Most Vulnerable

Text: Leaders' Statement of the Pittsburgh Summit

Released September 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Barack Obama To Travel to Copenhagen

Released September 29

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Extends Gulf Coast Rebuilding Office, Pushes for Improved Long-Term Recovery Following Catastrophic Disasters

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to American Samoa

Released September 30

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces Recovery Act Funding for Groundbreaking Medical Research

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Signs Presidential Determination Authorizing up to 80,000 Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2010

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Kansas

Fact sheet: Recovery to Discovery: $5 Billion Recovery Act Investment in Scientific Research and Jobs

Released October 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a background briefing by a senior administration official on the opening comments at the P–5-plus-1 meeting in Geneva, Switzerland

Statement by the Press Secretary: Deputy National Security Adviser, NSC Chief of Staff Mark Lippert Returning to Active Duty in the U.S. Navy

Released October 2

Transcripts of press gaggles by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India to the White House

Released October 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: White House Announces *Federal Register* 2.0: Transforming the Chronicle of the Executive Branch for the 21st Century

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces New Initiatives During National Disability Employment Awareness Month

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Signs an Executive Order Focused on Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance

Released October 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released October 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released October 8

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released October 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama, Cabinet Members To Visit New Orleans

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2131 and H.R. 3593

Fact sheet: Obama Administration Fights for American Families: Protecting Consumers, Investors, and Taxpayers

Advance text of the President's remarks on consumer financial protection

Released October 12

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces Tribal Nations Conference

Released October 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3663

Released October 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Calls on Congress To Extend Economic Recovery Payment for 2010

Released October 15

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama and Local Residents Discuss Rebuilding and Recovery in New Orleans

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 1707

Fact sheet: Gulf Coast Recovery

Advance text of the President's opening remarks at a town hall meeting in New Orleans, LA

Released October 16

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary on the United States-European Union summit

Excerpts of remarks by National Economic Council Director Lawrence H. Summers at the Economist's Buttonwood Gathering in New York City

Released October 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs, Deputy Assistant to the President on Economic Policy Jared Bernstein, and Domestic Policy Council Director Melody C. Barnes

Statement by the Press Secretary: State Governments Expected to Credit Recovery Act With Creating, Saving at Least 250,000 Education Jobs Nationwide

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1687, H.R. 2053, H.R. 2121, H.R. 2498, H.R. 2913, and S. 1289

Released October 20

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama To Sign Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act into Law

Statement by the Press Secretary on the October 17 Economic Community of West African States summit

Statement by the Press Secretary on the sentencing of Iranian American scholar Kian Tajbakhsh to a 15-year prison term by Iranian authorities

Released October 21

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces New Small Business Lending Initiatives

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2997

Advance text of the President's remarks on small-business initiatives in Landover, MD

Released October 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released October 23

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary: White House Announces Global Technology and Innovation Fund

Statement by the Press Secretary on the 53rd anniversary of the Hungarian uprising of 1956

Released October 24

Statement by the Press Secretary on the detention of human rights lawyer Haitham Maleh by Syrian authorities

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Puerto Rico

Released October 26

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on health care reform

Excerpts of remarks by Council of Economic Advisers Chair Christina D. Romer to the Center for American Progress

Advance text of the President's remarks at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, FL

Released October 27

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces $3.4 Billion Investment To Spur Transition to Smart Energy Grid

Advance text of the President's remarks at a campaign rally for Virginia Gubernatorial candidate R. Creigh Deeds in Norfolk, VA

Released October 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2892 and H.R. 3183

Released October 29

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to the White House

Advance text of the President's remarks on small business and health care reform

Text: Statement by the Council of Economic Advisers Chair Christina D. Romer on the GDP

Released October 30

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: New Recipient Reports Confirm Recovery Act Has Created, Saved Over One Million Jobs Nationwide

Statement by the Press Secretary on South Korea's contribution to the efforts in Afghanistan

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of President Seretse Khama Ian Khama of Botswana

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2996 and S. 1929

Released November 2

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released November 3

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 1818

Advance text of Office of Management and Budget Director Peter R. Orszag's remarks at New York University

Text of a U.S.-EU summit declaration and associated annexes

Released November 4

Transcript of a press gaggle by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

Fact sheet: The Race to the Top: Promoting Innovation, Reform, and Excellence in America's Public Schools

Advance text of the President's remarks to students and faculty at James C. Wright Middle School in Madison, WI

Released November 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released November 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chair Christina D. Romer on the employment situation in October

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.J. Res. 26, H.R. 1209, H.R. 3548, H.R. 3606, S. 832, and S. 1694

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to North Dakota

Fact sheet: The Worker, Homeownership, and Business Assistance Act of 2009

Text of an essay by Dr. Jill Biden published in USA Weekend Magazine

Released November 7

Announcement: Tuesday: President and First Lady To Attend Fort Hood Memorial Service

Released November 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes, National Security Council Senior Director for East Asian Affairs Jeffrey Bader, and Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Michael Froman on the President's visit to Asia

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Launches Major Veterans Employment Initiative

Released November 10

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the new Lebanese Government

Advance text of the President's remarks at a memorial service at Fort Hood, TX

Released November 11

Statement by the Press Secretary on the contributions of Japan's Government to Afghanistan and Pakistan

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 509

Released November 12

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released November 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes on the President's Speech at Suntory Hall, Tokyo, Japan

Transcript of a background briefing by a senior administration official on the President's meeting with Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama of Japan

Statement by the Press Secretary on the resignation of Gregory B. Craig as White House Counsel and the appointment of Robert Bauer as White House Counsel

Fact sheet: U.S.-Japan Cooperation on Clean Energy Technologies

Text: Letter of Resignation from White House Counsel Gregory B. Craig

Released November 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs, Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Michael Froman, and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communication Ben Rhodes on the President's visit to Singapore and the APEC summit

Advance text of the President's remarks in Tokyo, Japan

Released November 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs, National Security Council Senior Director for Russia Michael McFaul, and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes on the APEC summit and the President's meeting with President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Michael Forman

Fact sheet: APEC Leaders Meeting—Key Accomplishments

Advance text of the President's remarks at the APEC summit

Released November 16

Statement by the Press Secretary: White House Announces December Date for Forum on Jobs and Economic Growth

Released November 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs, U.S. Ambassador to China Jon H. Huntsman, Jr., National Security Council Senior Director for Asian Affairs Jeffrey Bader, Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Michael Froman, and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Jerusalem Planning Committee's approval of settlement expansion in Jerusalem

Fact sheet: U.S.-China Cooperation on 21st Century Coal

Fact sheet: U.S.-China Energy Efficiency Action Plan

Fact sheet: U.S.-China Electric Vehicles Initiative

Fact sheet: U.S.-China Renewable Energy Partnership

Fact sheet: U.S.-China Clean Energy Research Center

Fact sheet: U.S.-China Shale Gas Resource Initiative

Released November 18

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's visit to China

Released November 19

Statement by the Press Secretary on the election of a new European Council President and High Representative

Statement by the Press Secretary on House of Representative passage of the Medicare physician payment reform legislation

Released November 21

Statement by the Press Secretary on Senate action on health care reform legislation

Released November 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Launches "Educate to Innovate" Campaign for Excellence in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Education

Statement by the Press Secretary on the U.S.-India CEO Forum

Released November 24

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Establishes New Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues

Fact sheet: U.S.-Indian Cooperation

Fact sheet: U.S.-India Cooperation to Protect the Health of Their People

Fact sheet: Stimulating Global Economic Revival, U.S.-India Cooperation in Economics, Trade, and Agriculture

Fact sheet: Enhancing U.S.-India Cooperation on Education and Development

Fact sheet: Advancing Global Security and Countering Terrorism

Fact sheet: U.S.-India Green Partnership to Address Energy Security, Climate Change, and Food Security

Released November 25

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs, Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Michael Froman, and Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change Carol M. Browner

Statement by the Press Secretary: President To Attend Copenhagen Climate Talks

Released November 26

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Iranian Government's additional charges against Iranian American scholar Kian Tajbakhsh

Released November 27

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit by Australian Prime Minister Rudd

Statement by the Press Secretary on the International Atomic Energy Agency's censure of Iran

Statement by the Press Secretary on a train derailment in Russia

Released November 29

Statement by the Press Secretary on reports about Iran's nuclear program

Released November 30

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Secretaries Hillary Rodham Clinton and Kathleen Sebelius, Ambassador Eric Goosby and Valerie Jarrett Review Obama Administration Efforts on HIV/AIDS

Released December 1

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by senior administration officials on the President's speech at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, NY

Fact sheet: The Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan

Excerpts of the President's remarks at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, NY

Advance text of the President's remarks at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, NY

Released December 2

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of President Michel Sleiman of Lebanon

Released December 3

Statement by the Press Secretary on the disappearance of American citizen Robert Levinson in Iran

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Arkansas

Released December 4

Statement by the Press Secretary on the United Nations Climate Change Conference

Advance text of the President's remarks at Lehigh Carbon Community College in Allentown, PA

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chair Christina D. Romer on the employment situation in November

Released December 6

Statement by the Press Secretary on Iraq's election law

Released December 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the passage of Iraq's revised election law

Released December 8

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces Proposals To Accelerate Job Growth and Lay the Foundation for Robust Economic Growth

Statement by the Press Secretary: Administration Launches Comprehensive Open Government Plan

Advance text of the President's remarks on job creation and economic growth

Released December 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces Recovery Act Awards To Build, Renovate Community Health Centers in More Than 30 States

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Releases National Strategy for Countering Biological Threats

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Virginia

Released December 10

Statement by the Press Secretary on the comprehensive energy framework announced by

Senators John F. Kerry, Joseph I. Lieberman, and Lindsay O. Graham

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Louisiana

Advance text of the President's remarks on accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway

Text: Statement by National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., on International Human Rights Day

Released December 11

Statement by the Press Secretary on the European Council declaration on Iran

Released December 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate Global Partnership

Fact sheet: Clean Energy Technology Announcements

Released December 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the election of President Traian Basescu of Romania

Released December 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that on December 15 the President signed H.R. 4218

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 4217 and H.R. 3288

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Nebraska

Released December 18

Transcript of a press gaggle by a senior administration official

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Alaska

Advance text of the President's remarks at a plenary session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark

Released December 19

Statement by the Press Secretary: Americans Praise the Copenhagen Accord

Released December 21

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces Agencies to Save $19 Billion in Contracting Reforms

Statement by the Press Secretary on the enactment of the Airline Flight Crew Technical Corrections Act

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that on December 19 the President signed H.R. 3326

Released December 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.J. Res. 62, H.R. 4165, and S. 1472

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Alabama

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to New Jersey

Released December 23

Transcript of remarks by Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John O. Brennan at the Pam Am Flight 103 memorial service at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, VA (dated December 21)

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Kansas

Released December 24

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Released December 27

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesman Mike Hammer on the violence in Iran

Released December 28

Statement by the Press Secretary on new Israeli construction in East Jerusalem

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3819, H.R. 4284, and H.R. 4314

Released December 29

Transcript of a press briefing by National Security Council Chief of Staff Denis R. McDonough (dated December 28)

Transcript of a background briefing by a senior administration official

Statement by the Press Secretary on the extension of the Generalized System of Preferences Program and the Andean Trade Preferences Act

Released December 30

Statement by the Press Secretary on the death of former President Abdurrahman Wahid of Indonesia

Released December 31

Transcript of a background press briefing by a senior administration official

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Alabama

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to New York

Text: Statement by National Security Council Spokesman Mike Hammer on the detention of human rights activities in Russia

Appendix D—Presidential Documents Published in the Federal Register

This appendix lists Presidential documents released by the Office of the Press Secretary and published in the Federal Register. The texts of the documents are printed in the Federal Register (F.R.) at the citations listed below. The documents are also printed in title 3 of the Code of Federal Regulations and in the Compilation of Presidential Documents.

PROCLAMATIONS

Proc. No.	*Date 2009*	*Subject*	*74 F.R. Page*
8395	Jul. 6	National Summer Learning Day, 2009	33137
8396	Jul. 17	Captive Nations Week, 2009	36393
8397	Jul. 23	35th Anniversary of the Legal Services Corporation, 2009	37159
8398	Jul. 24	Anniversary of the Americans With Disabilities Act, 2009	37923
8399	Jul. 24	National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day, 2009	37925
8400	Aug. 20	Minority Enterprise Development Week, 2009	43027
8401	Aug. 21	Fiftieth Anniversary of Hawaii Statehood	43025
8402	Aug. 25	Women's Equality Day, 2009	44721
8403	Aug. 26	Death of Senator Edward M. Kennedy	44725
8404	Aug. 30	National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week, 2009	45527
8405	Aug. 31	To Adjust the Rules of Origin Under the North American Free Trade Agreement and for Other Purposes	45529
8406	Aug. 31	National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month, 2009	45535
8407	Aug. 31	National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, 2009	45727
8408	Aug. 31	National Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, 2009	45729
8409	Sept. 3	National Wilderness Month, 2009	45977
8410	Sept. 3	National Days of Prayer and Remembrance, 2009	46301
8411	Sept. 4	Labor Day, 2009	46661
8412	Sept. 4	National Preparedness Month, 2009	46663
8413	Sept. 10	Patriot Day and National Day of Service and Remembrance, 2009	47045
8414	Sept. 11	To Address Market Disruption From Imports of Certain Passenger Vehicle and Light Truck Tires From the People's Republic of China	47861
8415	Sept. 14	National Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Week, 2009	47867
8416	Sept. 14	Fifteenth Anniversary of the Violence Against Women Act	47869

PROCLAMATIONS (Continued)

Proc. No.	*Date 2009*	*Subject*	*74 F.R. Page*
8417	Sept. 15	National Hispanic Heritage Month, 2009	47997
8418	Sept. 16	Constitution Day and Citizenship Day, Constitution Week, 2009	48129
8419	Sept. 17	National POW/MIA Recognition Day, 2009	48355
8420	Sept. 21	National Farm Safety and health Week, 2009	49301
8421	Sept. 22	National Hunting and Fishing Day, 2009	49305
8422	Sept. 25	Gold Star Mother's and Families' Day, 2009	50667
8423	Sept. 25	National Public Lands Recognition Day, 2009	50669
8424	Sept. 28	Family Day, 2009	50671
8425	Sept. 30	National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, 2009	51221
8426	Sept. 30	National Disability Employment Awareness Month, 2009	51223
8427	Oct. 1	National Cybersecurity Awareness Month, 2009	51441
8428	Oct. 1	National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, 2009	51443
8429	Oct. 1	National Information Literacy Awareness Month, 2009	51445
8430	Oct. 2	National Arts and Humanities Month, 2009	51733
8431	Oct. 2	National Energy Awareness Month, 2009	51735
8432	Oct. 2	Fire Prevention Week, 2009	51737
8433	Oct. 2	Child Health Day, 2009	51739
8434	Oct. 6	German-American Day, 2009	52383
8435	Oct. 7	Leif Erikson Day, 2009	52863
8436	Oct. 9	National School Lunch Week, 2009	53145
8437	Oct. 9	Columbus Day, 2009	53147
8438	Oct. 9	General Pulaski Memorial Day, 2009	53149
8439	Oct. 15	White Cane Safety Day, 2009	53877
8440	Oct. 19	National Character Counts Week, 2009	54891
8441	Oct. 19	United Nations Day, 2009	54893
8442	Oct. 23	National Forest Products Week, 2009	55437
8443	Oct. 23	Declaration of a National Emergency With Respect to the 2009 H1N1 Influenza Pandemic	55439
8444	Oct. 30	Military Family Month, 2009	57225
8445	Oct. 30	National Adoption Month, 2009	57227
8446	Oct. 30	National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month, 2009	57229
8447	Oct. 30	National Diabetes Month, 2009	57231
8448	Oct. 30	National Family Caregivers Month, 2009	57233
8449	Oct. 30	National Native American Heritage Month, 2009	57235
8450	Oct. 30	Veterans Day, 2009	57237
8451	Nov. 6	Honoring the Victims of the Tragedy at Fort Hood, Texas	58529
8452	Nov. 9	World Freedom Day, 2009	58531
8453	Nov. 13	America Recycles Day, 2009	59473
8454	Nov. 19	National Entrepreneurship Week, 2009	61259

PROCLAMATIONS (Continued)

Proc. No.	*Date 2009*	*Subject*	*74 F.R. Page*
8455	Nov. 20	National Farm-City Week, 2009	61261
8456	Nov. 20	National Family Week, 2009	62195
8457	Nov. 20	National Child's Day, 2009	62197
8458	Nov. 20	Thanksgiving Day, 2009	62199
8459	Nov. 25	World AIDS Day, 2009	63269
8460	Dec. 2	Critical Infrastructure Protection Month, 2009	64585
8461	Dec. 2	National Impaired Driving Prevention Month, 2009	64587
8462	Dec. 2	International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 2009	64589
8463	Dec. 4	National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, 2009	65381
8464	Dec. 9	Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, And Human Rights Week, 2009	66211
8465	Dec. 15	65th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, 2009	67801
8466	Dec. 16	Wright Brothers Day, 2009	67967
8467	Dec. 23	To Modify Duty-Free Treatment Under the Generalized System of Preferences, and for Other Purposes	69221
8468	Dec. 23	To Take Certain Actions Under the African Growth and Opportunity Act	69229

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8469	Dec. 31	40th Anniversary of the National Environmental Policy Act, 2010	885

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

E.O. No.	*Date 2009*	*Subject*	*74 F.R. Page*
13510	July 1	Waiver Under the Trade Act of 1974 With Respect to the Republic of Belarus	32047
13511	Sept. 29	Continuance of Certain Federal Advisory Committees	50909
13512	Sept. 29	Amending Executive Order 13390	50911
13513	Oct. 1	Federal Leadership on Reducing Text Messaging While Driving	51225
13514	Oct. 5	Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance	52117

EXECUTIVE ORDERS (Continued)

E.O. No.	*Date 2009*	*Subject*	*74 F.R. Page*
13515	Oct. 14	Increasing Participation of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Federal Programs	53635
13516	Oct. 28	Amending Executive Order 13462	56521, 57241
13517	Oct. 30	Amendments to Executive Orders 13183 and 13494	57239
13518	Nov. 9	Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government	58533
13519	Nov. 17	Establishment of the Financial Fraud Enforcement Task Force	60123
13520	Nov. 20	Reducing Improper Payments	62201
13521	Nov. 24	Establishing the Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues	62671
13522	Dec. 9	Creating Labor-Management Forums to Improve Delivery of Government Services	66203
13523	Dec. 11	Half-Day Closing of Executive Departments and Agencies on Thursday, December 24, 2009	66563, 67049
13524	Dec. 16	Amending Executive Order 12425 Designating Interpol as a Public International Organization Entitled to Enjoy Certain Privileges, Exemptions, and Immunities	67803
13525	Dec. 23	Adjustments of Certain Rates of Pay	69231

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13526	Dec. 29	Classified National Security Information	707, 1013
13527	Dec. 30	Establishing Federal Capability for the Timely Provision of Medical Countermeasures Following a Biological Attack	737

OTHER PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Doc No.	*Date 2009*	*Subject*	*74 F.R. Page*
09–22	July 1	Presidential Determination: Presidential Determination Under Section 402 (c)(2)(A) of the Trade Act of 1974—Republic of Belarus	32785

OTHER PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS (Continued)

Doc No.	*Date 2009*	*Subject*	*74 F.R. Page*
09–23	July 8	Presidential Determination: Waiver of Restriction on Providing Funds to the Palestinian Authority	41787
	July 16	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Former Liberian Regime of Charles Taylor	35763
	July 17	Memorandum: Assignment of Reporting Functions Under the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2009	35765
	July 30	Memorandum: Guidelines for Human Stem Cell Research	38885
	July 30	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Actions of Certain Persons To Undermine the Sovereignty of Lebanon or its Democratic Processes and Institutions	38321
	Aug. 5	Memorandum: Designation of Officers of the Office of Science and Technology Policy To Act as Director	39871
	Aug. 6	Memorandum: Assignment of Function Under Section 601 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009	40055
09–24	Aug. 13	Presidential Determination: Continuation of U.S. Drug Interdiction Assistance to the Government of Colombia	42573
	Aug. 13	Notice: Continuation of Emergency Regarding Export Control Regulations	41325
	Aug. 21	Memorandum: Provision of Aviation Insurance Coverage for Commercial Air Carrier Service in Domestic and International Operations	43617
	Aug. 31	Memorandum: Designation of Officers of the United States Section, International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico To Act as the Commissioner of the United States Section	45533
09–25	Sept. 7	Presidential Determination: Eligibility of the Maldives to Receive Defense Articles and Defense Services Under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as Amended, and the Arms Export Control Act, as Amended	48361
09–26	Sept. 7	Presidential Determination: Eligibility of the Economic Community of Central African States To Receive Defense Articles and Defense Services Under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as Amended, and the Arms Export Control Act, as Amended	48363
	Sept. 10	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Certain Terrorist Attacks	46883

OTHER PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS (Continued)

Doc No.	*Date 2009*	*Subject*	*74 F.R. Page*
09–27	Sept. 11	Presidential Determination: Continuation of the Exercise of Certain Authorities Under the Trading With the Enemy Act	47431
09–28	Sept. 11	Presidential Determination: Imports of Certain Passenger Vehicle and Light Truck Tires From the People's Republic of China	47433
09–29	Sept. 14	Presidential Determination: Presidential Determination With Respect to Foreign Governments' Efforts Regarding Trafficking in Persons	48365
09–30	Sept. 15	Presidential Determination: Presidential Determination on Major Illicit Drug Transit or Major Illicit Drug Producing Countries for Fiscal Year 2010	48369
	Sept. 17	Memorandum: Demonstration Grants for the Development, Implementation, and Evaluation of Alternatives to the Current Medical Liability System	48133
	Sept. 21	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Persons Who Commit, Threaten to Commit, or Support Terrorism	48359
09–31	Sept. 29	Presidential Determination: Presidential Determination on the Delegation of Certifications Under Section 1512 of Public Law 105–261	50913
09–32	Sept. 30	Presidential Determination: Fiscal Year 2010 Refugee Admissions Numbers and Authorizations of In-country Refugee Status Pursuant to Sections 207 and 101(A)(42), Respectively, of the Immigration and Nationality Act, and Determination Pursuant to Section 2(B)(2) of the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act, as Amended	52385
10–01	Oct. 8	Presidential Determination: Waiver of and Certification of Statutory Provisions Regarding the Palestine Liberation Organization Office	52865
10–02	Oct. 16	Presidential Determination: Provision of U.S. Drug Interdiction Assistance to the Government of Brazil	54429
	Oct. 16	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Significant Narcotics Traffickers Centered in Colombia	53879
	Oct. 20	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Situation in or in Relation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo	54741
	Oct. 27	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Sudan	55745
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Calderon Hinojosa, Felipe de Jesus—1074, 1233, 1244–1247, 1849, 1854, 1865
Callahan, John B.—1768
Callahan, Richard G.—1892
Calmes, Maggie—1513
Camacho, Michael—1115, 1117
Camerer, Mark D.—1662
Campbell, Craig E.—1663
Campbell, Mary S.—1859
Campos, Roel C.—1880
Canada, Geoffrey—1100, 1125, 1462
Cannon, Caroline—1645
Cao, Anh Quang "Joseph"—1513, 1515
Cao, Betsy—1513
Cao, Sophia—1513
Capps, Lois—1112
Cappuccio, Karen—1493
Capp, David A.—1880, 1904
Capuano, Michael E.—1567, 1573
Caraveo, Angela—1656
Caraveo, Eduardo—1656
Caraveo, John—1656
Caraveo, Jose—1656
Carbon, Susan B.—1863, 1894
Cardin, Benjamin L.—1414, 1555
Cargill, David L., Jr.—1852, 1888
Carney, Christopher P.—1374, 1768
Carrion, Adolfo, Jr.—1100
Carson, Andre—1219, 1340
Carter, Dwayne M. "Lil' Wayne"—1127
Cartwright, James E. "Hoss"—1542
Casey, George W., Jr.—1421, 1656
Casey, Robert P., Jr.—1374, 1399, 1402, 1403, 1877
Castor, Kathy N.—1593
Chaffee, Michael—1391
Chaisson, Joel T., III—1513
Chambliss, Saxby—1849
Chapman, Susan—1492, 1493
Chapman, Tracy—1527
Chen Bingde—1703
Chen, Edward M.—1853, 1890
Cherry, John D., Jr.—1105
Chiarelli, Peter W.—1542
Childs, Edith—1349, 1383, 1384, 1420, 1562, 1619, 1623
Childs, J. Michelle—1879, 1903
Chin, Denny—1864, 1894
Chopra, Aneesh—1301, 1429
Christensen, Donna M.—1613
Christie, Christopher J.—1559, 1617, 1620, 1621, 1869
Chu, Judy—1849
Chu, Steven—1034, 1179, 1485, 1507, 1639, 1684, 1709, 1718, 1720, 1813
Cieslewicz, Dave—1631
Cisneros, Henry G.—1098
Clay, Peggy Goldwater—1878
Cliburn, Harvey L. "Van," Jr.—1638
Clinton, Hillary Rodham—1048, 1172, 1177, 1181, 1373, 1435, 1437, 1438, 1441, 1469, 1675, 1721, 1727, 1731, 1738, 1821, 1849, 1851, 1852, 1855, 1857, 1863, 1864, 1867, 1870, 1873, 1876, 1879
Clinton, William J.—1216, 1312, 1322, 1436, 1437, 1439, 1462, 1507, 1532–1534, 1639, 1853, 1855, 1858
Clyburn, James E.—1460, 1793
Coakley, Martha—1492, 1567
Coats, Sanford C.—1862, 1893
Cochran, Kelvin J.—1846, 1887
Codey, Richard J.—1117
Coelho, Anthony—1173
Cohen, David L.—1399, 1402
Cohen, George H.—1883
Cohen, Larry—1115
Coleman, Christopher B.—1378
Coleman, Sara—1193, 1194
Cole, Chelsea M.—1193
Collier, Sheila—1031
Collins, Francis S.—1466, 1467, 1847, 1884
Collins, Jeffrey—1248
Collins, Michael—1133
Collyns, Charles—1858, 1894
Colvin, Carolyn W.—1861, 1894
Comaneci, Nadia E.—1409
Commons, Gladys J.—1858, 1893
Conaton, Erin C.—1871, 1898
Concannon, Kevin W.—1888
Cone, Robert W.—1656, 1870
Conley, William M.—1868, 1897
Connolly, Gerald E.—1019, 1505, 1813
Conrad, Kent—1849, 1855, 1866
Conyers, John, Jr.—1340, 1605
Cook, Donald L.—1875, 1901
Cooper, Ann N.—1835
Cooper, James H.S.—1141
Cooper, Roy—1492
Corbett, Rebecca—1862
Cordray, Richard—1344
Corker, Robert—1849
Corr, William V.—1793
Corscia, Anthony R.—1898
Corvington, Patrick A.—1534, 1863, 1894
Corzine, Jon S.—1115, 1117, 1558, 1616, 1620
Coscia, Anthony R.—1864
Costas, Bob—1849
Cotter, Michael W.—1861, 1892
Cownie, T.M. Frank—1759, 1767

Coyle, Philip E., III—1868, 1897
Crabtree, Polly—1286
Craig, Gregory B.—1862
Crayton, Gene A.—1659
Crenshaw, Ander—1583
Criscitello, Douglas A.—1871, 1898
Crofts, Christopher A.—1874, 1900
Cronkite, M. Kathleen—1360
Cronkite, Nancy E.—1360
Cronkite, Walter L.—1129, 1360
Cronkite, Walter L. "Chip," III—1360
Crosby, Sidney—1375
Crowley, James—1152, 1171, 1205, 1208, 1851
Crowley, Jeffrey S.—1498, 1614
Crowley, Joseph—1551
Crown Prince Haakon—1799, 1805
Crown Prince Muhammad bin Zayid Al Nuhhayan—1857
Crown Princess Mette-Marit—1799, 1805
Crown Prince Willem-Alexander—1858
Cuellar, Noel—1759
Cullerton, John—1163
Culver, Chester J. "Chet"—1470
Cummings, Elijah E.—1414
Cunningham, Christopher M.—1422
Cunningham, Donald—1768
Cuomo, Andrew M.—1426, 1492
Cuthbert, Mike—1182–1186, 1188–1193
Cuttle, Charles—1322

Dai Bingguo—1177, 1435
Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso—1702
Daley, Richard M.—1101, 1477, 1478
Dann-Messier, Brenda—1885
Daschle, Thomas A.—1855
Daugherty, Brad—1855
Davidson, Karen—1180
Davies, Glyn T.—1848, 1885
Deale, Thomas H.—1714
de Blasio, Bill—1551
DeCrow, Marikay—1656
Deeds, Amanda—1224, 1226
Deeds, Rebecca—1224, 1226
Deeds, R. Creigh—1224, 1226, 1596
Deeds, Susannah—1224, 1226
deJongh, John P., Jr.—1470
Delahunt, William D.—1860, 1892
de la Serna, Francisco—1657
DeLisi, Scott H.—1872, 1899
Demag, David E.—1852, 1888
Demarest, Joseph M.—1544
DeMint, James W.—1132, 1143, 1156, 1166
De Niro, Robert—1781
Dennison, Katherine—1714
Denton, Helen—1296
DeNucci, A. Joseph—1567
Dettelbach, Steven M.—1848, 1885
Devan, Matthew A.—1538, 1539
Diamond, Neil L.—1808
Diaz, Albert—1869, 1897
Diaz, Miguel H.—1865
DiCarlo, Rosemary A.—1875, 1901
DiClemente, Albert—1864, 1898
Diers, Jody—1282
Dilbert, Charlie—1344, 1345
Dillon, Andy—1105
DiMicco, Daniel R.—1852
DiNapoli, Thomas P.—1426
DiNardo, Marc—1115, 1117
Dingell, John D., Jr.—1212, 1363, 1611
DiVincenzo, Joseph N.—1620
Dobrow, Marty—1341
Dodd, Christina—1577
Dodd, Christopher J.—1021, 1034, 1112–1114, 1386, 1388, 1492, 1577, 1711, 1880
Dodd, Grace—1577
Dodd, Jackie Clegg—1577
Doerr, John—1624
Dole, Elizabeth H.—1172
Dole, Robert J.—1172, 1495, 1550, 1554
Donahoe, Eileen C.—1871
Donahue, John—1391
Donilon, Thomas E.—1881
Donnelly, Joe—1219
Donovan, Shaun L.S.—1098, 1100, 1513, 1514, 1639
Dorgan, Byron L.—1641
Doyle, James E.—1631
Doyle, Michael F.—1374
Driehaus, Steven L.—1097, 1344, 1492
Driscoll, Jean—1409
DuBois, Glenn—1019
DuBois, Joshua—1866
Duckworth, L. Tammy—1507
Duke, Michael T.—1852
Duncan, Arne—1072, 1167, 1170, 1339, 1350–1352, 1354, 1355, 1471, 1508, 1513, 1629, 1630, 1633, 1639, 1718, 1719, 1771, 1857
Durao Barroso, Jose Manuel—1628
Durbin, Richard J.—1605, 1880
Dvorkovich, Arkady V.—1058, 1064
Dzhibladze, Yuri—1067
D'Agostino, Thomas P.—1856

Eacho, William C., III—1884
EchoHawk, Larry J.—1639
Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew—1869
Edwards, Donna F.—1414, 1555
Edwards, T. Chester—1532, 1564
Eikenberry, Karl W.—1540, 1865, 1867, 1876
ElBaradei, Mohamed—1450, 1473, 1682, 1707, 1741

Elkins, Arthur A., Jr.—1873, 1899
Elliott, Daniel R., III—1846, 1886
Ellison, Keith—1340
Ellis, Burrell—1098
Ellsworth, Brad—1219
Emperor Akihito—1675, 1872
Empress Michiko—1675, 1872
Enzi, Michael B.—1146, 1252, 1312, 1322, 1613
Erdogan, Recep Tayyip—1782, 1868, 1876
Escovedo, Pete—1504
Escovedo, Sheila—1504
Eshoo, Anna G.—1485
Espinel, Victoria A.—1861, 1893
Esquea, Jim R.—1848, 1889
Estefan, Emilio, Jr.—1860
Estefan, Gloria—1504
Euille, William D.—1813
Evans, Nancy—1631
Evans, Richard A.—1480

Faison, Gwendolyn A.—1616
Faleomavaega, Eni F.H.—1472
Fauci, Anthony S.—1467
Feinberg, Kenneth R.—1563
Feinstein, Dianne—1525
Feinstein, Lee A.—1849, 1886
Feldblum, Chai R.—1858, 1891
Feliciano Garcia, Jose Montserrate—1504
Fernandez, Alberto M.—1850, 1886
Fernandez, John R.—1846, 1886
Fernandez, Jose W.—1850, 1889
Ferriero, David S.—1851, 1887
Ferrini, Thomas G.—1248
Ferro, Anne S.—1886
Fichtner, Nancy—1831, 1832, 1879
Field, R. William—1866
Figueroa del Rivero, Dolores Conchita—1265
Filner, Robert—1564
Fines Nevares, Efrain "Tito El Bambino"—1504
Finn, Chester A.—1878, 1902
Fischer, Jan—1414, 1859
Fisher, Lee—1344
Fish, Emil—1871
Fitzgerald, Keith—1593
Fleury-Brown, Donna—1664
Fleury, Albert—1664
Flygare, Christopher—1664
Fominykh, Konstantin—1058, 1063
Ford, Cheryl—1180
Fox, Christine H.—1862, 1894
Fraim, Paul D.—1596
France, Brian, III—1307
Franken, Al—1378
Franklin, Aretha—1779
Franklin, Barbara B.—1859
Frank, Barney—1384, 1386, 1388, 1421, 1492, 1565, 1601, 1605
Freeman, Mark—1153
Freudenthal, Nancy D.—1876, 1901
Frieden, Thomas R.—1339
Friedgen, Ralph—1414
Friedman, Thomas L.—1762
Frist, William H.—1495, 1550, 1554
Fudge, Marcia L.—1153
Fugate, W. Craig—1334, 1514, 1518

Gaffaney, Christine—1656
Gaffaney, Matthew—1656
Gallagher, Patrick—1857, 1895
Garamendi, John—1527, 1869
Garcia, Joe A.—1846
Garcia, Jose Antonio—1886
Gardiner, William F.—1555
Gardner, Glen—1296
Gardner, Jean—1296
Garner, Hershey—1480
Garrett, Major—1873
Garver, Lori B.—1133, 1488
Garza, Alexander G.—1846, 1884, 1887
Gates, Henry Louis, Jr.—1152, 1171, 1205, 1851
Gates, Robert M.—1135, 1299, 1340, 1373, 1376, 1413, 1421, 1532, 1533, 1536, 1604, 1650, 1652, 1656, 1681, 1703, 1721, 1738, 1849, 1850, 1853, 1854, 1859, 1862, 1864, 1865, 1868, 1869, 1870, 1874, 1875, 1877
Gates, William H., III—1354
Gaytan, Peter S.—1853
Gee, Dolly M.—1854, 1890
Geithner, Timothy F.—1177, 1373, 1384, 1385, 1388, 1492, 1556, 1557, 1722, 1759, 1785, 1788, 1850, 1851, 1853, 1857, 1863, 1864, 1867, 1870
Gelser, Sara A.—1878, 1903
Genachowski, Julius—1429
Geren, Preston M. "Pete," III—1421
Gergel, Richard M.—1879, 1903
Germanotta, Stefani J.A. "Lady Gaga"—1496
Giannoulias, Alexi—1163
Gibbons, John—1869, 1897
Gibbs, Robert L.—1171, 1647, 1813, 1864
Gibson, Katie—1268, 1269, 1270, 1280, 1655
Gilg, Deborah K.R.—1852, 1888
Gillette, Jodi A.—1639
Gillibrand, Kirsten—1262
Gill, Tom E., III—1193
Gingrich, Newton L.—1125
Ginsburg, Ruth Bader—1262, 1263
Giordano, Andrew—1493
Given, Maxine—1493
Glied, Sherry—1884
Glover, Bruce—1714
Gohl, Earl F., Jr.—1872, 1899

Goldberg, Philip S.—1867, 1897
Goldman, Julianna—1858
Goldstein, Jeffrey A.—1850, 1886
Goldwater-Clay, Peggy—1903
Goldway, Ruth Y.—1853
Gompert, David C.—1853, 1889
Goodman, Norma—1157
Gorbachev, Mikhail S.—1058, 1846
Gordon, Daniel I.—1863, 1894
Gordon, Jeff—1306, 1307
Gordon, Phil—1296
Gorenberg, Mark—1525
Gore, Albert A., Jr.—1216, 1438, 1876
Gore, Tipper—1496
Gotbaum, Joshua—1871
Graham, Jim—1391
Graham, Lindsey O.—1569, 1875
Granholm, Jennifer M.—1105, 1107, 1108
Grassley, Charles E.—1146, 1252, 1312, 1322, 1369
Gration, J. Scott—1539
Grayson, Alan—1587, 1589
Gray, Randy, Jr.—1714
Green, Al—1492
Green, David—1391
Greer, Pedro J.—1264
Gregg, Donald P.—1855
Gregoire, Christine O.—1172
Gregory, Tom—1605
Grey, Robert J., Jr.—1853, 1889
Grundmann, Susan T.—1852, 1888
Grunsfeld, John M.—1488
Gul, Abdullah—1783, 1845, 1866
Gural, Linda—1370
Guriev, Sergei—1058
Gustafson, Peggy E.—1883
Gutman, Howard W.—1866
Guyton, Nate—1370
Guzy, Gary S.—1849, 1886

Hackney, Joe—1194
Hagan, Kay—1194
Hagel, Charles T.—1213, 1602, 1603
Hagel, Tom—1602
Hall, Julia—1252
Hamilton, Lee H.—1880
Hamilton, Sam D.—1883
Hannah, James R.—1879, 1904
Hansen, Jennie C.—1182, 1187
Hanson, Beatrice A.—1879, 1904
Han Zheng—1690, 1692, 1721, 1872
Hare, Philip G.—1564
Harkin, Thomas R.—1114, 1172, 1613, 1817, 1852, 1880
Harman, Elizabeth M.—1865, 1895
Harper, Stephen—1233, 1244–1247, 1404, 1407, 1849, 1853, 1854
Harrison, Robert S.—1436
Harris, Buddy—1585
Harris, Louvon—1605
Harris, Steven—1718, 1721
Hartfield, Edward F.—1859
Hartog-Levin, Fay—1845, 1884
Hartridge, Regina—1131
Hartunian, Richard S.—1880, 1904
Harvey, Steve—1879
Hasan, Nidal M.—1650, 1652, 1657, 1661, 1681
Hasina Wajed, Sheikh—1877
Haskew, Barbara S.—1857, 1890
Hatch, Orrin G.—1336, 1369, 1612
Hatoyama, Yukio—1439, 1454, 1668, 1669, 1675, 1856, 1859, 1871
Hauser, Rita E.—1880
Hawking, Stephen W.—1264
Hayes, Brian—1847, 1885
Hay, Lewis, III—1593–1595
Healey, Lori T.—1476
Healy, Jerramiah T.—1115, 1117
Heaphy, Timothy J.—1852, 1888
Hearn, Nashala—1340
Helton, Mike—1307
Henderson, Frederick A. "Fritz"—1391, 1394
Hendrick, J. Riddick "Rick," III—1306
Henry, C. Bradford—1306
Henry, Ed—1873
Herseth Sandlin, Stephanie—1641
Hershinson, Ben—1255
Hessler-Radelet, Carrie—1871
Heun, Robert W.—1869, 1897
Hickey, Doug—1525
Higgins, Justin—1256
Hightower, Dennis F.—1850, 1887
Hild, Dixie—1296
Hill, Baron P.—1141
Hill, Bruce—1282
Hill, Christopher R.—1138
Himes, James A.—1577
Hinchey, Maurice—1426, 1428
Hirono, Mazie K.—1866
Hirschhorn, Eric L.—1858, 1890
Hitchcock, Lori—1248, 1249, 1251–1253, 1260, 1280
Hoang, Hieu "Kate"—1513
Hochberg, Fred P.—1496
Hochul, William J., Jr.—1880, 1904
Hockfield, Susan—1567
Hodes, Paul—1248, 1260
Hoffa, James P.—1757
Hoffman, Patricia A.—1876, 1902
Holder, Eric H., Jr.—1172, 1340, 1462, 1508, 1603, 1605, 1639, 1641, 1673, 1791, 1838, 1881
Holdren, John P.—1485, 1488, 1489, 1718
Holmes, Calvin L.—1066

Holt Baker, Arlene—1394
Holton, Anne—1226
Holtz-Eakin, Douglas J.—1756
Holt, Rush D.—1340, 1485
Hopkins, Ernest—1613
Hormats, Robert D.—1849, 1886, 1887
Horst, Karl R.—1659
Hortelano, Brian—1718, 1721
Howard, Constance A.—1163
Hoyer, Steny H.—1141, 1172, 1414, 1460, 1555, 1600
Hubbard, Thomas C.—1855
Hudson, Jeffrey S.—1583
Huebner, David—1496, 1864, 1895
Huerta, Michael P.—1876, 1902
Hughes, Ed—1436
Hu Jintao—1177, 1179, 1435, 1687, 1690, 1691, 1694, 1698, 1699, 1702, 1709, 1711, 1713, 1867, 1872
Hume, Cameron R.—1867
Hunter, Roszell "Rod"—1862, 1894
Huntsman, Jon M., Jr.—1177, 1686, 1689, 1691, 1694, 1883
Hunt, Clark—1097
Hunt, James B., Jr.—1194
Hyde, Pamela S.—1863, 1894
Hyneman, Jamie—1718
Hynes, Dan—1163

Iezzi, Joseph—1105
Iger, Robert A.—1757
Immelt, Jeffrey R.—1624
Incarnato, Joseph A.—1555–1558
Inouye, Daniel K.—1172
Irving, Earl M.—1845, 1883
Isaacson, Walter—1873, 1899
Isakson, Johnny—1253, 1280, 1291, 1321
Isbin, Sharon—1637
Israel, Steve—1551

Jackson-Lee, Sheila—1532
Jackson, Brian A.—1869, 1897
Jackson, Clarence, Jr.—1638
Jackson, Frank G.—1153
Jackson, Ketanji B.—1850, 1886
Jackson, Lisa P.—1098, 1100, 1485, 1645, 1867
Jackson, Randy—1767
Jacksteit, Mary—1858
Jacobson, Kaaren—1268
Jacobs, Brian—1131
Jacobs, James—1105
Jacques, Steven L.—1857, 1893
Jagland, Thorbjorn—1805
James, LeBron—1127, 1161
Jarrett, Valerie B.—1023, 1028, 1410
Jarvis, Jonathan B.—1767, 1848, 1885
Jemison, Mae C.—1488
Jennings, Gerald D.—1426
Jindal, Piyush "Bobby"—1512, 1517, 1519
Johnson, Brendan V.—1848, 1885
Johnson, Chandra—1306
Johnson, Eddie B.—1112, 1718
Johnson, Jack B.—1414, 1555
Johnson, Jimmie—1306
Johnson, Marvin E.—1859
Johnson, Michael D.—1409
Johnson, Orlan—1873, 1900
Johnson, Roosevelt—1593
Johnson, Timothy P.—1564
Johnson, Yewande J.—1131
Johnston, Philip W.—1723
Johns, Marie C.—1878, 1903
Jones, Dwight C.—1596
Jones, Emil, Jr.—1163
Jones, James L., Jr.—1543, 1856, 1864, 1869, 1881
Jones, Walter C.—1871, 1898
Jordan, Mary L.—1854
Jordan, Michael J.—1358
Joyner, Tom—1879

Kaine, Timothy M.—1019, 1025, 1224, 1226–1229, 1314, 1460, 1505, 1548, 1552, 1553, 1596–1599
Kaiser, Michael M.—1779
Kallon, Abdul K.—1852, 1888
Kamen, Dean—1720
Kaminski, Paul G.—1880
Kammerzell, John L.—1862, 1893
Kanjorski, Paul E.—1492, 1768
Kantor, Jodi—1862
Kappos, David J.—1485
Kaptur, Marcia C.—1856
Karzai, Hamid—1053, 1540, 1545, 1625, 1626, 1748, 1750, 1867, 1869, 1874
Katehi, Linda P.B.—1485
Kathwari, M. Farooq—1765
Katz, Allan J.—1874, 1900
Kaur, Gursharan—1725, 1726, 1728, 1736, 1874
Keckler, Charles N.W.—1878, 1903
Keehan, Carol A.—1865
Keel, Jefferson—1638, 1641
Keenan, Barbara M.—1858, 1891
Kelly, Ian C.—1874, 1900
Kelly, Raymond W.—1544
Kelly, Suedeen G.—1887, 1904
Keltz, Michael A.—1714
Kendall, Frank, III—1851, 1889, 1897
Kennard, William E.—1853, 1889
Kennedy, Caroline B.—1336, 1558
Kennedy, Craig—1870
Kennedy, Edith—1725
Kennedy, Edward M.—1021, 1034, 1113, 1114, 1261, 1266, 1332, 1333, 1335, 1368, 1369, 1848, 1856
Kennedy, Edward M., Jr.—1333, 1335, 1336, 1368, 1369, 1509, 1577

Kennedy, Ethel—1723
Kennedy, Kerry—1723
Kennedy, Laura E.—1871
Kennedy, Patrick J.—1333, 1335, 1336, 1368, 1496, 1508, 1509, 1600, 1605
Kennedy, Susan C.—1773
Kennedy, Victoria R.—1333, 1335–1368, 1509, 1511, 1600, 1605, 1856, 1880
Kerlikowske, R. Gil—1099
Kerry, John F.—1421, 1469, 1540, 1567, 1569, 1599, 1600, 1867
Kessler, Alan C.—1866, 1896
Khama, Seretse Khama Ian—1648, 1869
Khan, Elsheba—1340
Khouri, Michael A.—1875, 1901
Kibaki, Mwai—1221
Kikwete, Jakaya Mrisho—1055
Kilpatrick, Carolyn Cheeks—1180
Kilroy, Mary Jo—1097
Kimbriel, Beth—1314, 1315
Kim Dae-jung—1306, 1855
Kim Tae-young—1738
King Abdullah II—1855
King Harald V—1797, 1799, 1805, 1877
King, Betty E.—1867, 1896
King, Billie Jean—1265
King, Peter T.—1213
King, Robert R.—1861, 1892
Kirihara, James K. "Jake"—1507
Kirk, Paul G., Jr.—1452, 1509, 1510
Kirk, Ronald—1181, 1532, 1764, 1783
Kissinger, Henry A.—1451
Klinefeldt, Nicholas A.—1861, 1892
Klitzka, Laura—1020
Klitzka, Logan—1020
Klitzka, Pete—1020
Klitzka, Taylor—1020
Klobuchar, Amy—1378
Kmiec, Douglas W.—1845, 1883
Knappe, Michael—1131
Knaus, Chad—1306
Koh, Harold H.—1855
Kounalakis, Eleni T.—1895
Krauss, Alison—1136
Krishna, Somanahalli Mallaiah—1727
Krislov, Marvin—1846, 1886
Kristol, William—1143, 1156, 1166
Kroft, Steve—1858, 1876
Krueger, Jerilyn—1657
Kudrin, Aleksey L.—1064
Kufuor, John Agyekum—1087
Kullman, Kellie—1106
Kumar, Suresh—1868, 1897
Kundra, Vivek—1301
Kurland, Susan L.—1846, 1884
Kuttner, Robert—1760
LaBeaud, Elliot—1520
LaBeaud, Peggy—1520
Lago, Marisa—1861, 1892
Lahn, Zach—1292
LaHood, Raymond H.—1098, 1100, 1504, 1505, 1865
Laimbeer, William—1180, 1181
Laipson, Ellen—1880
Lamb-Hale, Nicole Y.—1873, 1899
Lampropoulos, Fred P.—1762
Lander, Eric S.—1567
Landrieu, Mary L.—1513, 1515, 1519, 1523
Landrieu, Mitch—1513
Landry, Sarah—1274
Laney, James T.—1855
Langevin, James R.—1172
Lange, Roberto A.—1847, 1884
Larson, John B.—1577
Laub, John H.—1863, 1894
Laughlin, Paul J.—1542
Lautenberg, Frank R.—1213, 1558
Lavelle, Marc—1115, 1117
Lavrov, Sergey V.—1048
Layon, Michael—1258, 1259
Leach, James A.S.—1856, 1885
Leahy, Patrick J.—1222, 1262, 1867, 1868
Ledbetter, Lilly—1347
Lee Hsien Loong—1684, 1872
Lee Kuan Yew—1610
Lee Myung-bak—1713, 1715, 1720, 1737, 1762, 1773, 1873
Lee Sang-eui—1714
Lee, Barbara—1460, 1613
Lee, Euna—1216, 1853, 1855
Lehrer, Jim—1879
Leiken, Earl—1153
Leiter, Michael E.—1482
Lemen, Richard—1866
Lemieux, Mario—1375
Leslie, Jack—1857
Letterman, David—1860
Levings, Marcus D.—1646
Levin, Carl—1105, 1135, 1180, 1604, 1605
Levin, Sander M.—1105, 1180
Levi, John G.—1853, 1889
Lewis, John R.—1128
Lidinsky, Richard A., Jr.—1858
Lincoln, Blanche L.—1869
Lind, Connie—1320, 1321
Ling, Laura—1216, 1853, 1855
Lion, Margo—1859
Lipnic, Victoria A.—1869, 1897
Littlefield, Elizabeth L.—1873, 1900
Liu, John C.—1551
Lobo, Rebecca—1341

Locke, Gary F.—1065, 1179, 1339, 1373, 1485, 1507, 1508, 1762, 1764, 1783
Loeffler, Karen L.—1848, 1885
Lofgren, Zoe—1485
Lomellin, Carmen L.—1858, 1891
Longoria Parker, Eva—1504
Long Thompson, Jill L.—1866, 1896
Lopez, Andres W.—1860
Lopez, George—1504, 1808
Lopez, Jennifer—1411
Lopez, Omar—1262
Lopez, P. David—1867, 1897
Loven, Jennifer—1845
Love, Reginald L.—1193
Lowery, Joseph E.—1265
Lowey, Nita M.—1551
Lubinski, Sharon J.—1865, 1895
Lugar, Richard G.—1340
Lula da Silva, Luiz Inacio—1098, 1478, 1824, 1847, 1855, 1878
LyBarger, Amelia—1282
Lyles, Lester L.—1880
Lynch, James P.—1868, 1897
Lynch, John H.—1248
Lynch, Susan E.—1248
Lynton, Michael—1873, 1899

Mabus, Raymond E., Jr.—1583
Macapagal-Arroyo, Gloria—1206,–1209, 1848
MacBride, Neil H.—1854, 1889
Machen, Ronald C., Jr.—1880, 1904
Macron, Diana L.—1160
Maddox, Victor B.—1878, 1903
Madigan, Lisa—1492
Magwood, William D., IV—1865, 1895
Mahama, John Dramani—1087
Mahlangu, Magodonga—1724, 1725
Mahorn, Derrick A. "Rick"—1180
Mahr, Alicia—1558
Mahr, Joel—1558
Main, Joseph A.—1846, 1883
Majumdar, Arun—1859, 1891
Makarov, Nikolai Y.—1048
Maliki, Nuri al- —1137, 1540, 1849, 1868
Malin, Martin H.—1859
Malkin, Evgeni—1375
Mallory, Mark—1344
Malloy, Dannel P.—1577
Maloney, Carolyn B.—1551
Mandela, Nelson R.—1040, 1266, 1799
Manford, Jeanne—1499
Mangat, Mona—1480
Manske, Nicole—1855
Manzano-Diaz, Sara—1862, 1894
March, Noel C.—1879, 1904
Mares, Stephen—1193
Markell, Jack A.—1470
Markey, Edward J.—1569, 1723
Marr, Thomas—1558
Marshall, Chad—1098
Marshall, D. Price, Jr.—1876, 1901
Martinez, Mark A.—1862, 1893
Martin, Leonard—1776
Martin, Paul K.—1862, 1894
Martin, William E.—1642
Matiella, Mary S.—1873, 1900
Matonak, Andrew J.—1426
Matsuda, David T.—1876, 1903
Mattea, Kathy—1344
Mayfield, Irvin M., Jr.—1858, 1891
May, Genevieve L.—1852, 1888
Ma, Yo-Yo—1638
McBride, Neil G.—1857, 1895
McCain, John—1029, 1135, 1177, 1299, 1365, 1369, 1584, 1604, 1828
McCall, Keith R.—1768
McCarthy, Carolyn—1112
McChrystal, Annie—1863
McChrystal, Stanley A.—1313, 1405, 1456, 1749, 1798, 1862, 1863, 1876
McComb, William L.—1757
McConnell, A. Mitchell—1600, 1601
McCue, Susan—1873, 1899
McDonnell, Robert F.—1869
McDonough, Denis R.—1880, 1881
McGee, Timothy—1878, 1903
McHugh, John M.—1421, 1542, 1656, 1883
McKeon, Howard P. "Buck"—1604
McKinney, Amanda E.—1480
McNerney, W. James, Jr.—1757
McNutt, Marcia K.—1847, 1889
McQuade, Barbara L.—1874, 1900
Medicine Crow, Joseph—1265, 1649
Medvedeva, Svetlana—1846
Medvedev, Dmitry A.—1038, 1042, 1046, 1057–1060, 1062, 1064, 1065, 1067–1069, 1077, 1448, 1460, 1682, 1777, 1802, 1822, 1845, 1846, 1853, 1867, 1874
Meehan, Michael P.—1873, 1899
Meeker, Charles—1194
Meeks, Gregory W.—1723
Meek, Kendrick B.—1460, 1587, 1589
Melancon, Charles J.—1513, 1515
Meles Zenawi—1824, 1877
Menendez, Robert—1262, 1410
Menino, Thomas M.—1567
Merkel, Angela—1453, 1626, 1861, 1875, 1877
Merkley, Jeff—1485, 1813
Merrigan, Kathleen A.—1888
Merrill, David N.—1867
Merten, Alan G.—1213
Michaels, David M.—1851, 1889

Michaud, Michael H.—1564
Mikulski, Barbara A.—1114, 1414
Miller, Brad—1194
Miller, George—1111, 1112, 1114, 1115, 1141, 1167, 1611
Miller, James L.—1213
Miller, James W.—1888
Miller, Mary J.—1864, 1894
Miller, Thomas V.M., Jr.—1414
Miller, Yvonne B.—1596
Millet, Jackie—1254
Mills, David W.—1875, 1901
Mills, John Evans Atta—1054, 1079, 1084, 1087, 1089, 1093, 1094, 1848
Mills, Karen G.—1098, 1492, 1556, 1557, 1607
Mills, Naadu—1093
Minnick, Walt—1492
Minow, Martha L.—1853, 1889
Misaka, Wataru—1507
Miscik, Jami—1880
Mishel, Lawrence—1757
Mitchell, Dennis—1115, 1117
Mitchell, George J.—1304, 1435, 1441
Mitchell, Harry E.—1213, 1300
Mohammed, Khalid Sheikh—1673
Mohan, John—1391
Molina, Frank, Jr.—1115, 1117
Moller, Patricia N.—1884
Mondale, Walter F.—1601
Moniz, Ernest J.—1567
Monson, Thomas S.—1133, 1850
Montgomery, Edward B.—1105, 1344
Montgomery, Mark—1279
Monti, Carys E.—1421
Monti, Janet E.—1421, 1423, 1542
Monti, Niccole T.—1421
Monti, Paul—1421, 1423, 1542
Monti, Timothy J.—1421
Moore, Caroline—1488, 1489
Moore, Kennedy—1394
Moore, Michael J.—1859, 1891
Moore, Robert—1488, 1663
Moran, James P.—1019, 1505, 1813
Morgan, Olivia—1872
Mote, C. Daniel—1415
Mourning, Alonzo—1591
Mourning, Tracy Wilson—1591
Mubarak, Mohamed Hosni—1302, 1852, 1855
Mudd, Philip—1883
Mueller, Robert S., III—1543, 1650, 1652, 1681, 1861, 1870
Mugabe, Robert—1724
Mulhaupt, Dennis—1873, 1899
Mulholland, Neil J.—1767
Mullen, Michael G.—1048, 1376, 1421, 1604, 1650, 1656, 1681, 1703, 1870
Mulligan, George D., Jr.—1866
Mundaca, Michael F.—1859, 1894
Munley, Kim—1657
Murkowski, Lisa—1849
Murphy, Christopher S.—1577
Murphy, M. Scott—1426, 1428
Murphy, Philip D.—1847, 1870, 1885
Murphy, Timothy—1374
Murray, Patty—1114, 1880
Murray, Timothy P.—1567, 1570, 1571, 1574–1576
Mutallab, Alhaji Umaru—1840
Myers, Mallory—1532, 1535

Nabiullina, Elvira S.—1065
Nachtigal, Gayle A.—1879, 1904
Nadler, Jerrold L.—1605
Nagin, C. Ray—1513, 1518
Nakakuni, Florence T.—1848, 1885
Nakamura, Patrick K.—1874, 1900
Nalbandian, John B.—1879, 1904
Napolitano, Giorgio—1070, 1071, 1847
Napolitano, Janet A.—1071, 1072, 1242, 1339, 1412, 1508, 1513, 1514, 1519, 1838, 1841, 1844, 1881
Navarro, Gloria M.—1880, 1905
Neal, Richard E.—1599
Nelson, C. William—1583, 1586, 1587, 1589
Nelson, David D.—1864, 1895
Nelson, E. Benjamin—1849
Nelson, Patricia—1492, 1493
Nelson, Russell C.—1268
Nelson, Willie—1137
Neronha, Peter F.—1852, 1888
Netanyahu, Benjamin—1434, 1444, 1566, 1860, 1870
Nettles, William N.—1879, 1904
Ne'eman, Ari—1878, 1903
Nguyen, Jacqueline H.—1852, 1888
Ng, Konrad—1236, 1507, 1676, 1691
Ng, Savita—1507
Ng, Suhaila—1507
Nicholson, Marvin—1856
Nickels, Gregory J.—1098
Nixon, Jeremiah W. "Jay"—1470
Noonan, Peggy—1871
Northup, Anne Meagher—1851, 1888
Norton, Eleanor Holmes—1600
Novak, Kathleen M.—1098
Nunn, Michelle—1532
Nunn, Samuel A., Jr.—1451, 1532
Nutter, Michael A.—1399, 1492

Oaks, Dallin H.—1133, 1850
Obama, Malia—1026, 1036, 1041, 1047, 1087, 1092, 1093, 1098, 1099, 1112, 1128, 1133, 1163, 1170, 1181, 1224, 1226, 1265, 1268, 1282, 1283, 1351, 1370, 1475, 1490, 1512, 1528, 1546, 1551, 1573,

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1587, 1590, 1630, 1635, 1636, 1670, 1685, 1695, 1742, 1743, 1768, 1808, 1829, 1836, 1845, 1846, 1847, 1852, 1854–1857, 1874, 1880
Obama, Michelle—1036, 1037, 1041, 1047, 1058, 1087, 1092, 1093, 1099, 1112, 1128, 1130, 1163, 1172, 1173, 1181, 1190, 1260, 1261, 1268, 1282, 1283, 1297, 1325, 1326, 1333, 1344, 1350–1352, 1357, 1359, 1370, 1371, 1376, 1378, 1408, 1410, 1425, 1437, 1462, 1469, 1474, 1475, 1477, 1484, 1485, 1498, 1512, 1528, 1532, 1546, 1551, 1564, 1573, 1584, 1585, 1587, 1590, 1598, 1611, 1613, 1630, 1635, 1637, 1638, 1664, 1670, 1685, 1693, 1725, 1728, 1735, 1743, 1744, 1768, 1771, 1779, 1795, 1797, 1805, 1808, 1823, 1829, 1835–1838, 1840, 1844
Obama, Natasha "Sasha"—1026, 1041, 1047, 1087, 1092, 1093, 1098, 1099, 1112, 1128, 1133, 1163, 1170, 1181, 1224, 1226, 1265, 1268, 1282, 1283, 1351, 1370, 1378, 1475, 1485, 1490, 1512, 1528, 1546, 1551, 1573, 1587, 1590, 1630, 1635, 1670, 1685, 1695, 1742, 1743, 1767, 1768, 1808, 1829, 1836, 1845–1847, 1852, 1854–1857, 1874, 1880
Odierno, Raymond T.—1139, 1798
Odinga, Raila Amolo—1221
Oldham, Frank J., Jr.—1613
Onorato, Dan—1453, 1457
Oostburg Sanz, Paul L.—1873, 1900
Orender, Donna—1180
Orszag, Peter R.—1722, 1785, 1831
Ortiz, Carmen M.—1860, 1891
Ostendorff, William C.—1877, 1902
Otto, Rebecca—1378
Ovechkin, Alexander M.—1058
Owens, William L.—1867, 1869, 1870
O'Brien, Michael J.—1391
O'Connor, Sandra Day—1265
O'Dell, Peggy—1767
O'Donnell, Steven G.—1854, 1889
O'Malia, Scott D.—1857, 1890
O'Malley, Martin—1414, 1470, 1555
O'Malley, Sean P. Cardinal—1335
O'Neill, Malcolm R.—1875, 1901
O'Ree, William—1375

Paisley, Brad—1136
Pak, Dongwoo J.—1878, 1903
Palin, Sarah—1316, 1766
Pallone, Frank, Jr.—1613, 1620
Palmer, Arnold—1862
Panetta, Leon E.—1881
Papandreou, Georgios Andreas—1863
Papst-Czemerda, Melissa—1657
Parkinson, Mark V.—1470
Parks, J. Anne—1348, 1383, 1419, 1562, 1619
Pascrell, William J.—1620
Patchin, Rebecca J.—1870
Paterson, David A.—1172, 1426, 1428
Patillo, Tawnya—1657
Patriarch Kirill—1068
Patrick, Deval L.—1567, 1568, 1570, 1573
Patrick, Diane—1573, 1576
Patrick, Katherine—1573
Patrick, Sarah—1573
Patterson, Brandon—1161
Patton, Rebecca M.—1112, 1113, 1370, 1870
Pawlowski, Ed—1766–1768, 1772
Payne, Charles—1296
Payne, Donald M.—1620, 1723, 1865
Pearce, Mark G.—1885
Pearlmutter, Michael—1324
Pearson, Benita Y.—1876, 1902
Peck, Rachel—1415, 1417
Pelletier, Walter—1742
Pelosi, Nancy—1141, 1362, 1410, 1525–1530, 1564, 1586, 1589–1592, 1600, 1605, 1608, 1611, 1613, 1779, 1836, 1857, 1864, 1867, 1870, 1874
Pena, Cindy—1860
Pena, Federico F.—1098
Pepper, David—1344
Perdue, Beverly E.—1194, 1470
Perea-Henze, Raul—1871
Peres, Shimon—1566
Perez, Jazmin—1357
Perino, Dana M.—1873, 1899
Perrelli, Thomas J.—1518
Perry, William J.—1451
Persily, Larry—1877, 1902
Peterson, Karen Carter—1513
Peterson, Rosanna M.—1865, 1895
Peters, Douglas J.J.—1556–1558
Petty, Richard—1306
Petzel, Robert A.—1873, 1899
Peyton, John S.—1583
Pfannenstiel, Jackalyne—1875, 1902
Phillips, Macon—1762
Phillips, M. Elizabeth—1862, 1893
Phillips, Richard—1584
Pipher, Randy—1287, 1292
Pizarchik, Joseph G.—1846, 1886
Poindexter, John—1543
Poitier, Sidney—1265
Polis, Jared—1605
Pollak, Abigail M.—1860
Pollin, Abe—1744
Pollin, Irene—1744
Pollin, James—1744
Pollin, Robert—1744
Polt, Michael C.—1861, 1893
Pope Benedict XVI—1494, 1848
Posner, Michael H.—1846, 1884
Posny, Alexa E.—1846, 1884

Potter, Wendell—1366
Powell, Colin L.—1859
Prahar, Peter A.—1865, 1895
Pratt, Awadagin—1637
Presilla, Maricel E.—1504
Pressler, Larry—1871
Preston, Kenneth. O.—1421
Pride, Charley—1136
Prince Consort Henrik—1863
Princess Cristina—1410
Princess Maxima—1858
Prokop, Stephen—1865
Punke, Michael W.—1856, 1891
Purcell, William R.—1202
Putin, Vladimir V.—1038, 1049, 1052, 1057, 1059, 1064, 1846

Quarterman, Cynthia L.—1854, 1891
Quaye, Patience—1089
Queen Margrethe II—1477, 1863
Queen Sonja—1799, 1805, 1877
Quehl, Scott B.—1866, 1896
Quigley, Kathleen—1131
Quinn, Patrick J., III—1163

Raclin, Caroline R.—1333, 1335, 1368
Raclin, G. Curran—1333, 1335, 1368
Raji, Azita—1525
Ramirez, Edith—1872, 1899
Randlett, Wade—1525
Rand, A. Barry—1182, 1187, 1192, 1870
Rangel, Charles B.—1111, 1599, 1611
Rapp, Stephen J.—1846, 1884
Rasmussen, Anders Fogh—1464
Rasmussen, Lars Lokke—1477, 1701, 1874, 1878
Rathie, Randy—1274–1276, 1278
Ravenstahl, Luke—1374, 1453, 1457
Rawlings, Jerry—1087
Raymond, Usher, IV—1808
Rediker, Douglas A.—1875, 1901
Redmond, Derek A.—1409
Reft, Alicia—1644
Reggie, Edmund M.—1336
Rehbein, David K.—1853
Reich, Sonia—1370
Reid, Chip—1873
Reid, Harry—1158, 1223, 1262, 1525, 1526, 1528, 1529, 1600, 1711, 1829, 1836, 1850, 1857, 1864, 1880
Reinfeldt, John Fredrik—1625, 1628
Reischauer, Robert D.—1866, 1896
Reiskin, Julie A.—1853, 1889
Reiss, Christina—1865, 1895
Remington, Michelle—1714
Rendell, Edward G.—1098, 1399, 1400, 1768, 1770, 1772
Retton, Mary Lou—1409
Revere, Evans J.R.—1856
Reynolds, Carol J.—1878, 1903
Rice, Susan E.—1174, 1181, 1460, 1566
Richardson, David B.—1866
Richardson, Willie L., Jr.—1874, 1901
Ride, Sally K.—1488, 1718, 1719
Risch, James E.—1485
Ritter, A. William—1282, 1283
Ritter, Jeannie—1282
Rivera, Megan—1656
Rivera, Tiffany—1656
Roaf, Phoebe—1513
Roberson, Jessie H.—1866, 1896
Robinson, Craig—1173, 1352
Robinson, Elizabeth M.—1859, 1891
Robinson, Laurie O.—1891
Robinson, Marian—1092, 1128, 1163, 1350, 1357, 1630, 1768, 1808, 1852
Robinson, Mary—1266
Rockefeller, John D. "Jay," IV—1859, 1880
Rogers, John F.W.—1871
Rogge, Jacques—1474, 1858
Rojas Joy, Katina—1325
Romer, Christina D.—1384, 1385, 1492, 1769, 1785
Romney, W. Mitt—1601
Romo, Lawrence G.—1868, 1897
Rooney, Daniel M.—1861
Rooney, T.J.—1399
Roos, John V.—1222, 1675
Roos, Susan—1222
Rosekind, Mark R.—1862, 1894
Rosenbaum, Jason S.—1026, 1027
Rose, Stephanie M.—1861, 1892
Rossman, Crystal—1282
Ross, Laura Gore—1860, 1892
Ross, Marjorie—1421
Rothman, Steven R.—1558, 1616, 1620
Rovner, Julie—1879
Rowe, Leslie V.—1858, 1891
Rowley, Janet D.—1266
Rowling, Joanne K.—1358
Rudd, Kevin M.—1074, 1847, 1874
Rugola, Joseph P.—1344
Ruppersberger, C.A. "Dutch"—1415
Ruttledge, Lynnae M.—1866, 1896
Ryan, Frederick J., Jr.—1871
Ryan, Patrick G.—1476, 1478
Ryan, Timothy J.—1391
Ryan, Timothy P.—1512
Rybak, R.T.—1378, 1383

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Salazar, John T.—1282
Salazar, Kenneth L.—1268, 1282, 1283, 1410, 1411, 1504, 1639, 1640, 1645, 1646, 1649, 1767, 1791

Sampson. John L.—1426
Samuels, Bryan H.—1885
Sanders, Bernard—1793
Sansom, William B.—1876, 1902
Santelle, James L.—1874, 1901
Sarbanes, John—1415
Sargsian, Serzh—1863
Sarkozy, Nicolas—1452, 1859, 1865, 1867, 1874, 1877
Sarubbi, Joe—1426
Savage, Adam—1718
Schmidt, Eric E.—1770
Schmidt, Peter—1251
Schmid, Sigi—1097
Schultz, Andoni—1357
Schultz, Howard—1852
Schumer, Charles E.—1262, 1428, 1853, 1880
Schuster, Elaine—1860, 1892
Schwartz, Allyson Y.—1768
Schwarzenegger, Arnold A.—1495
Schwarzman, Stephen A.—1779
Schweitzer, Brian D.—1268, 1269, 1274, 1470, 1471
Schweitzer, Nancy—1268
Scofield, Julie—1613
Scorby, Chris—1583
Scorby, John C., Jr.—1583
Scorsese, Martin—1779, 1781
Scott, Robert C.—1019, 1213, 1596
Scott, Terrence—1524
Scowcroft, Brent—1870
Seager, Cynthia—1657
Sebelius, Kathleen—1071, 1072, 1097, 1308, 1339, 1340, 1368, 1373, 1378, 1418, 1466, 1482, 1485, 1508, 1793, 1795, 1862
Seeborg, Richard—1854, 1890
Segal, Evan J.—1888
Seidenberg, Ivan G.—1852
Selden, Angie—1757
Sensenbrenner, F. James, Jr.—1172
Serino, Richard A.—1847, 1885, 1887
Sessions, Jefferson B., III—1222
Shaheen, Jeanne—1248
Shah, Rajiv J.—1871, 1898
Shannon, Stephen C.—1596, 1599
Sharpton, Alfred C., Jr.—1125
Sharp, Joanne—1714
Sharp, Walter L. "Skip"—1714, 1716
Shea-Porter, Carol—1248, 1260
Shelby, Richard C.—1386, 1492
Shepard, Dennis—1497, 1605
Shepard, Judy—1497, 1605
Shepard, Logan—1605
Sherman, Harris D.—1857, 1890, 1893
Sherman, Wendy R.—1856
Sherwood-Randall, Elizabeth—1856
Shima, Terry—1507
Shinseki, Eric K.—1213, 1300, 1301, 1507, 1564, 1637, 1659, 1777, 1831, 1832, 1853
Shirley, Joe, Jr.—1296
Shriver, Anthony P.K.—1261
Shriver, Eunice Kennedy—1261
Shriver, Maria—1261
Shriver, Mark K.—1261
Shriver, Robert S., III—1261
Shriver, R. Sargent, Jr.—1261
Shriver, Timothy P.—1261
Shultz, George P.—1451
Siddiqui, Islam A.—1860, 1892
Siegel, Robert—1879
Silva, Larry—1865
Silver, Sheldon—1384, 1426
Simmons, E. Denise—1567
Singh, Manmohan—1725, 1727, 1731–1735, 1824, 1863, 1865, 1874
Sink, Adelaide "Alex"—1587, 1589
Sizemore, Doug—1344
Skelton, Isaac N. "Ike," IV—1604
Skvara, Steve—1395, 1399
Sleiman, Michel—1811, 1875
Smalls, Fred—1326
Smerconish, Michael A.—1307
Smith, Christopher H.—1860, 1892
Smith, Debbie—1024, 1025
Smith, Fred W.—1871
Smith, James—1516, 1517
Smith, Katie—1180
Smith, Parker—1162
Smith, Stephen J.—1862, 1893
Smits, Jimmy—1504
Snipes-Austin, Monica—1167
Snowe, Olympia J.—1146, 1252, 1312, 1322, 1502, 1503, 1849, 1855
Snyder, Larry J.—1866
Sodi Miranda, Ariadna Thalia—1504
Soetoro-Ng, Maya—1507, 1676, 1691, 1805
Solana Madariaga, Javier—1628, 1629
Solis, Hilda L.—1098, 1172, 1344, 1347, 1373, 1396, 1410, 1411, 1504, 1508
Solmonese, Joe—1496
Solomont, Alan D.—1853, 1890
Solomon, Ian H.—1863, 1898
Sommers, Jill E.—1850, 1886
Sorian, Richard—1863, 1894
Sotomayor, Celina—1262, 1263
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Sotomayor, Sonia M.—1203, 1222, 1262, 1410, 1411, 1504, 1552, 1848, 1853, 1857
Southers, Erroll G.—1857, 1891
Sparks, Lillian A.—1867, 1896
Spearman, Kenneth A.—1846, 1886, 1887
Specter, Arlen—1374, 1394, 1399, 1402, 1466, 1605
Speicher, Joanne—1585

Speicher, Madison—1585
Speicher, Makenzie—1585
Speicher, Meghan—1585
Speicher, Michael—1585
Spicer, Tim—1355
Spratt, John M., Jr.—1141
Springsteen, Bruce—1781
Stabenow, Debbie—1105, 1880
Stackley, Sean—1858
Stanley, Clifford L.—1866, 1896
Stasch, Julia M.—1098, 1099
Steele, Michael S.—1156
Steinem, Gloria M.—1601
Stephenson, Randall L.—1757
Stephens, Kathleen—1714, 1855
Stevens, George, Jr.—1779, 1859
Stevens, John P.—1262, 1263
Steve, Shantell—1357
Stewart, Carter M.—1848, 1885
Stewart, Mitch—1318–1321, 1326
Stiglitz, Joseph E.—1757
Stock, Judith Ann Stewart—1876, 1902
Stoltenberg, Jens—1795, 1865, 1877
Stranch, Jane B.—1853, 1889
Strickland, Ben—1391
Strickland, David L.—1876, 1902
Strickland, Theodore—1153, 1344
Stroum, Cynthia—1858, 1891
Strug, Kerri A.—1409
Sullivan, Louis W.—1495
Summers, Lawrence H.—1385, 1492, 1785
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Sutton, Betty—1391
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Swanson, Lori R.—1378
Sweeney, John J.—1344, 1394, 1396
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Talabani, Jalal—1863, 1864, 1868
Talbott, Strobe—1785
Tarver, Edward J.—1860, 1891
Taylor, Gardner C.—1193
Teehee, Kimberly K.—1639
Tefft, John F.—1862, 1893
Templin, Robert G.—1019
Tenenbaum, Inez Moore—1878
Tester, Jon—1268
Thaman, Michael H.—1815
Thomas, Harry K., Jr.—1873, 1900
Thomas, Robert K.—1808
Thomas, Tillman—1878
Thompson, Glenn—1374
Thompson, O. Rogeriee—1864, 1894
Thompson, Tommy G.—1495
Thompson, William C., Jr.—1124, 1551
Thornburgh, Richard L.—1172
Thorne, David—1883
Tighe, Kathleen S.—1873, 1900
Tittle, Jan—1296
Todd, Chuck—1873
Todd, Mark—1657
Tompkins, Anne M.—1880, 1904
Tonko, Paul D.—1426, 1428
Tonsager, Dallas P.—1888
Torres-Gil, Fernando—1878, 1903
Tozer, Theodore W.—1878, 1903
Tradewell, Sharon—1296
Tradewell, Thomas—1296
Treki, Ali Abdussalam—1440
Troy, William J.—1662
Trumka, Richard L.—1344, 1394, 1624
Tsakopoulos-Kounalakis, Eleni—1865
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